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My Countrymen

BY

AN IRISHMAN

101

THIRD IMPRESSION

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PREFACE.

THIS book owes its origin to a barber's shop. While the proprietor (not my usual virtuoso) was cutting my hair, he drew my attention to the fact that I was, as he kindly put it, "getting a little thin on top." I agreed with him, thinking that the conversation would pass to more vital topics, such as the latest murder or the probable winner of the Derby; but he was not satisfied with a merely verbal assent, which showed no penitent yearning for reform: life was real, life was earnest; and if I were not prepared to be up and doing something about it, my Laodicean attitude would reflect discredit on the profession generally. He urged upon me, in succession, a thorough shampoo, Ultra-Violet Rays, 'Whatto,' and a speciality of his own that gentlemen spoke very favourable of; and when I rejected this, the Benjamin of his trade, upon the impromptu excuse that baldness was cooler in summer, he emptied a combful of clippings into the gap between my neck and collar, and observed, philosophically: "Well—some fellers has good jobs and don't care."

It was true, even in the personal implications. There had been years when I was compelled to supplement the wages of honest toil by adding to the printed matter of the country; and in the way of business I was nothing if not correct. I said all the proper things because editors hired me to say them; and I said them with tremendous conviction because I believed I ought to believe them, and I was ashamed to confess my lack of other people's taste. But my literary orthodoxy has ceased to have any connection with my daily bread: in the beautiful phrase of Kai Lung, a sufficiency of taels is paid to me monthly for activities which have no concern with literature or the arts. Yet I had never realised that my chains were broken, that I could write whatever I chose without having to forgo a single ounce of tobacco or a twopenny ride on a tramcar. All my life I had, in practice, been assuring myself that Don't Care was hanged; and here suddenly it was made plain that Don't Care was the beginning, if not of wisdom at least of candour.

Straightway there floated up the idea of a book to be written because I wanted to write it. "Invest me in my motley; give me leave to speak my mind"—I, too, coveted that privilege, though I knew it would have to be used anonymously, for long malpractice has deprived me of the power of telling the truth over my own signature; so burdened, I could not avoid a sham modesty: I should put my finger metaphorically in my mouth and simper coyly at the public; but as the shadow of a name I hoped to make some approach to

plain dealing. I could use the simple word 'I' whenever it came naturally to my pen, without feeling that decency demanded either an apology or a periphrasis. I could shed the grim unnatural dignity I maintain in my home and office; I might even venture upon a joke if, like Eliza's husband, I saw any real occasion for it.

When I visit the circulating library, which is now my solitary link with culture, and contemplate the piles of wholesome fiction that load its shelves, my first passionate impulse is not to read them: I fly for refuge to the authors who deal with ascertained fact—the great teachers who instruct us in plumbing because they believe in plumbing, who see in it (contrary to general opinion) a force for righteousness, who are ready to take a blow-pipe and some solder and a pinch of resin, and make the world brighter and better while you wait. Unfortunately, I do not know anything useful, or ambition might well have spurred me to crown the existing manuals with a masterpiece; but as next to those I enjoy books of reminiscences, I sat down to write one, on the faith of Leslie Stephen's statement that nobody ever produced a dull autobiography. At the worst, I might win the fame of a pioneer. I had no cause to plead, no thesis to support: my only credential was that I, being a person of no importance, saw and heard things that persons of importance are not allowed to hear or see. I wanted to describe my countrymen without any distortion except my own, to relate some incidents which seemed characteristic or amusing, to rid myself of remarks that haunted

me for expression like a sneeze, to preserve the memory of a few obscure people I had loved. I was born before the gramophone and the pneumatic tyre were invented, before electric trams were practicable, when theatres were lit by gas, when there were no motor-cars or aeroplanes or submarines or cinemas in existence, when ' wireless ' and X-rays and radium and relativity were still unguessed at ; but so was every one of my own age, and I had no desire to chronicle a half-century of wonderful inventions : I wished to record certain changes that had taken place in the manners and customs of my own little corner of the Universe, to rescue from oblivion some aspects of an Ireland that has vanished. If the result pleased a reasonable number of readers, I should rejoice ; and if not . . . well, I had a good job, and didn't care.

" There are two things which I am confident I can do very well," said Dr Johnson. " One is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it is to be executed in the most perfect manner. The other is a conclusion, showing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and the public." I have neither the good doctor's confidence nor his skill. I have set out what I aimed at, but I cannot altogether explain why the book has fallen short of the glory and the freshness of its conception. I may have been righteous over-much—the opposite error is so natural that I take it for granted. After so often saying acceptable things because they were acceptable, I detected myself in the

zeal of conversion saying offensive things because they were offensive—and struck them out. But a year hence, if I live, I shall doubtless find that others like them have remained. And there is always the insuperable difficulty that part of my subject is the very medium through which I view it.

A friend, against whom I have no grudge except that he is a Plymouth Brother, told me that a novice in his congregation was called upon, for the first time and without notice, to lead the assembly in prayer. He stammered through a few supplications and broke down; but after a distressing pause he managed to frame and utter a final sentence: "I shall not multiply words without understanding; I . . . I . . . I shall leave that to the elder brethren who have more experience." I am entitled to this prerogative, myself, now, but I shall not take advantage of it further than to say that rather less than a third of these pages have already appeared in print. I must express my indebtedness to the editor of 'Blackwood's Magazine,' in whose hospitable columns the substance of six chapters found a temporary home; and my thanks are also due to the editors of the 'Spectator,' the 'New Statesman,' and the 'Democrat' for the occasional paragraphs of my former journalism incorporated here. All these have been rewritten, and some errors of fact corrected which escaped me when they were originally published.

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MY COUNTRYMEN

CHAPTER I.

THE GLAMOUR OF LUNACY.

"Irish people, without distinction of sex or class, are pessimists about their future and that of their country, light-hearted, humorous, cheerful on the whole, and quite confident that nothing will ever succeed."—E. Œ. Somerville.

"We're a mighty peculiar people—glory be to God!" That apostrophe is the only summary of my fellow-countrymen I ever heard which was absolutely accurate, both in content and atmosphere. Of all other verdicts, including my own, the best I can say is that parts of them are partially just. The more plausible they seem the more likely they are to be wrong, while even the improbability of a paradox will not necessarily make it true. The tradition of the stage and the novel stereotypes the Irishman as romantic, reckless, sentimental, humorous, alcoholic, and foolish. Bernard Shaw presents him as realistic, sober, and astute; Thackeray thought that all Irishmen belonged to an unofficial Mutual Advertisement

Society; Dr Johnson pronounced them to be a fair-minded people because they never spoke well of one another; and Viscount Morley said they were diabolical. There is evidence for and against all these propositions, but I am myself too Irish to be misled by mere evidence, of which our national view is that "if oral it is probably perjured, and if written it is probably forged" (as Lord Darling said in another connection), but that we must not be prejudiced against a case merely because the only evidence in its favour has been fabricated by the police. I have lived fifty years in the country, and long enough out of it to get some standard of comparison; and all I am sure of is that I shall never be able to anticipate its next move, but when the move is made I shall see at once that it was inevitable. In Ireland all facts are doubtful and all inferences open to question. Let me give an example.

For over two decades I had to pass every week through one of the oldest parts of Dublin. On the left of the laneway that formed my short-cut lay half an acre of waste land, on which a cluster of middle-class houses had stood "since Adam was a boy," as the vernacular put it, or, in more definite terms, since the early eighteenth century, until an opportune fire demolished them in the third quarter of the nineteenth. Some traces of former conditions still remained: here a broken wall, the bricks pale yellow and crumbling, the mortar dropping away in ragged lumps; there half a gable end, the chimney almost intact, but the fireplace a blackened hole, the depository of obscene

horrors. Not a blade of grass appeared above the earth; it was trodden hard by the bare feet of children, for whom it was the only available playground, and it was covered with a sediment of tin cans, scraps of paper, broken crockery, and bits of ironware rusted out of all recognition. Its hollows were filled with stagnant water; its hills composed of cinders, vegetable refuse, and worse, amongst which a grimy goat could usually be seen nosing in search of interest and refreshment. Facing this desolation stood a row of two-storied houses, built about the same period as those that had gone. They leaned drunkenly askew, they bulged out over the pavement, cracks ran up their sides from doorstep to roof, and the soot-laden plaster rotted in scabs from the front like a monstrous skin disease. The mouldering doors gaped on their hinges, the windows were grimed thick with the dirt of generations, the sashes were coming adrift from the glass, and the glass itself was starred where it was not altogether broken. The only attempt at decoration was the family washing stuck out on poles from the upper storeys. Some tenants, less hardy or more practical than their neighbours, had stuffed the larger holes in their casements with rags or brown paper; but in general, decay was allowed to run its course without protest or remedy. In any ordinary civilised town the houses would have been condemned and destroyed long previously. Perhaps they are now, for I have not visited the spot since the Irish Free State set up business on its own account; but in Dublin at the end of last century or the beginning

of this, no civic matter was urgent which a publican or a slum owner could induce a friend in the Corporation to postpone. Nor, I must add in fairness, was it easy to persuade the occupants of such places to leave them. I have seen two families united in screaming objection to their forcible removal when the adjoining tenement had dissolved into its constituent débris the day before, and their own followed suit the day after. Repairs of any kind are, of course, useless when the main fabric is on the brink of collapse, and Murphy's Alley (the name will serve as well as its own) hung together inviolate from year to year, in the sure and certain hope that so long as it stood it would harbour tenants, and so long as there were tenants a profitable rent could be exacted.

To this spot I was once accompanied by a Colonial visitor of caustic views and a forceful personality, nourished on the uplift pages of his favourite magazine. The day was not happily chosen for comfort, but it was appropriate enough to Murphy's Alley. It was raining, and had been raining venomously all night; and on the open waste tributary streams from the higher-lying pools had connected them with their lower brethren, already swollen by the direct gift from the heavens, until small rivers were pouring into the street, and the heaps of garbage stood up as islands in a lashed and muddy sea. Water burst from gorged gutters in the roofs and raced down the walls into the fissures or vomited itself impartially on the pavement, and a fog of leaping raindrops hung six inches above the battered cobble-stones.

My friend, with cascades streaming from his umbrella, halted to memorise the scene, and used it to drive home some vital lessons which he had already made abundantly clear to me; that people who lived (if you could call it living) under such conditions must be (*a*) miserable, and (*b*) immoral—he used the last word in its more limited sexual sense.

I did not contest either point. I felt that (*a*) was true of myself then at any rate, and I wanted to get out of the wet. Besides, he was one of those strong silent men who talk a great deal and are not amenable to argument. So I thought of Ernest Renan's mother, and agreed that he was right a thousand times, and we went whither we were bound.

Undoubtedly the stage was set for deeds of darkness and sin; but as Shakespeare has taught us, it is possible to play the clown acceptably in a graveyard, and an Irishman's sunshine is not always dependent upon the state of the sky. I knew the place and its inhabitants longer, if not better, than its critic did, and my impression was that, compared with a similar number of middle-class English living in a hygienic suburb, they were remarkably cheerful, and their standard of feminine virtue was high. Not long before, a Rolls-Royce car, driven by an Exalted Past Master of the Noble Order of Chauffeurs, had moved majestically over those very cobble-stones, and pulled up opposite a house in no way distinguishable as to dirt and dilapidation from its neighbours. Out of the coupé emerged a Vision in furs, jewels, silk

stockings, and French shoes—an incredible display of prosperity against the drab background—and picked its way daintily through the mud to the open door, through which it disappeared.

"Hello!" said I to one of my acquaintances leaning, as was his custom of an afternoon, against the next corner, and philosophising on life from the point of view of a man to whom thirty shillings a week and two bottles of Guinness daily left the Hereafter practically no object. "What's up now?"

"Don't ye know who that is?" he exclaimed, as though astonished at my ignorance of a celebrity.

I didn't: some philanthropic Countess from the Viceregal Court, I hazarded.

"Countess me neck!" he retorted—a local idiom, signifying disbelief and contempt. "That's Molly O'Hanlon. . . . She used to live down here before she was ruined."

Observe the *mot juste*: the harlot might be imperious without offence in Bond Street, but in Murphy's Alley she sank to her level: she was ruined amidst riches.

I have noticed the same attitude of mind reaching expression over and over again in Dublin theatres. In the Royal or the Gaiety, which were patronised largely by those who esteemed themselves remote from the vulgar, the daring comedian would find his succulent jests receiving as appreciative a titter as he could expect in Leicester Square; but woe betide him if he ventured on an indelicacy in the Tivoli or the Empire (now the Olympia) before an audience ranging from clerks

to coal-heavers. I have heard a well-known singer hissed to silence for a song she had given with applause in most of the cities of Great Britain; and when the first imitator of Miss Maud Allan came on the stage of the Empire she was greeted with an intake of the breath which I knew meant hostility. "Go back an' put some more clo'es on ye, ma'am!" was the opening gun fired from the gallery. "An' take a bar of soap wid ye!" followed from the opposite corner before the first shot had gone well home. It was unkind, but perhaps not unmerited. Dublin had not then been educated by the increasing purpose of Revue up to Mr George Moore's inextinguishable rapture over the naked human leg; and it certainly did seem, as the famous preferred Blonde phrases it, "She couldn't have got her knees as dirty as that in just eighteen years." The final comment: "That's not dancing: that's calisthenics," which came from a bored army instructor, fell as an anti-climax after the first surprise.

It is this quality of sheer unexpectedness that gives Ireland its charm; it shines before the world in all the glamour of lunacy. Every day somewhere within its borders men are doing mad things out of kindliness or spite, for an ideal or a joke, through the malice of a fiend or the impishness of a child, to earn Heaven or win a sixpenny laugh from the gallery, or possibly most often of all, for the stark fascinating insanity of the thing itself. Where else could you behold a Physical Force party being protected by the police from the violence of pacificists? As a nation, the Irish

seek a despot to lead them to the desired haven of a Republic; as individuals, they are constantly ready to shed blood for causes they habitually deride. No one asks why. The madness of an idea is its own sufficient recommendation: "Enough its simple loveliness for them." Their desires are as hard to cater for as those of a little lady whom I discovered in tears because her mother had bought pink candles for her birthday cake instead of the white ones she had ordered. "Were you very keen on white candles, Peggy?" I inquired. "No . . . I wanted ye-yellow ones," she sobbed. This may be thought to be a personal idiosyncrasy; but a specimen of the class Group Insanity, sub-class Quixotic, occurs to me as I write.

When the Government in public was announcing that it held murder by the throat, and in private was shaking hands with the more prominent assassins, when a policy of alternate internment and release was considered most suitable to conciliate a paradoxical people, the word went forth that certain persons in Wexford were to be put in jail. Thereupon a detachment of military was sent down to the village where they lived to effect their arrest; but when the round-up was finished it was revealed that the simple-minded peasantry had wrecked the railway to Dublin with that intelligent thoroughness which Irishmen devote to a piece of mischief, and the natives could not be taken away until it was repaired. This was a matter of some hours, and meanwhile there was nothing to be done but wait.

Now the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race is most conspicuous in their capacity for downright empty waiting. What astonishes the stranger in London is not so much the traffic or the public statues as the number of people who are willing to stand for hours in a queue. Other nations would chatter or quarrel or try to carry the entrance by storm: the English just wait. It is doubtful if they even think: their strength is to stand still. But the railway station was wet, wind-swept, and barren of even an automatic machine; so by mutual consent all parties returned to the cheerfulness and warmth of the local public-house. Tommy is a sociable soul, and having acquired refreshment for himself he wants to share it with his companions; the soldiers therefore stood drinks to the civilians, and the civilians, not to be outdone in hospitality, stood drinks to the soldiers. The feeling of every one present seemed to be in line with Mr Micawber's, that any genial warmth exhibited should not be frozen by him; and song succeeded story until both merged in an impromptu dance, which ended only when the news came that a temporary repair had been made, and the train was ready to start.

Here a difficulty arose. The whisky was potent and the soldiers were young. Few of them were now capable of making their own way to the station, much less of controlling other people thither. The civilians, however, though adequately drunk, were still able to walk, and even to lend a hand to friends in need; and it was out of the question to allow anything to happen which might mar the hilarity of the occasion. ("How could

we let the poor young divvels get into thrubble for losin' their pris'ners ? ") So the captives helped their captors to the railway, fell with them fraternally and enthusiastically into the waiting carriages, and arrived in due course at Westland Row Station in Dublin, where they were all placed indiscriminately under arrest by the indignant authorities.

Next, an example of the Unexpected—Class B. (Individual). The late Judge Morris once stated a rule of contracts in Ireland : " Speakin' in general, an Irishman 'll keep any bargain that the law and the police compel him to," and this ruling was referred to with approval in official circles when we first heard of the Two Just Men of County Meath. Somehow or other, two tenant farmers had managed, without signing any agreement, to obtain advances of money from a public Department for the improvement of their holdings, and as there was nothing on record to show their indebtedness, several years were allowed to slip by before any one thought of asking for the usual instalments on the loan. When the mistake was discovered, it seemed hopeless to try to correct it, and the Secretary of the Department wrote to the Treasury, admitting the error, and suggesting that the amount should be written off as a bad debt. " By no means," answered the pundit at Whitehall. " Let the borrowers be asked to pay. Doubtless they are honest men who will not repudiate a just charge, even though there is no evidence of the transaction or legal means of enforcing it." Such, at least, was the effect of the communication when freed, to some extent, from

the pontifical phraseology of My Lords of the Treasury as delivered by the clever young men from Oxford who endow their gabbling purposes with words. The letter caused much joy in the Irish official world; it was considered typical of Treasury mentality to expect two Irish farmers, not proved to be insane, to pay money to a public office when they could not even be threatened with a writ. Still, just to humour the Powers that Be, and with some amused speculation over the replies that were likely to be received, the two demands were prepared and issued; and by return of post there came not only the current instalments but also the arrears from the beginning.

Now, I ask you . . .

To the British mind there is nothing in the management of a railway to encourage freakishness and levity. Englishmen expect timings to be observed, rules to be obeyed, and signals to be watched with care; even a touch of pedantry in running to schedule would not be amiss. They do not urge pointsmen and drivers to take up their duties in a mood of gay adventure. If, "all unseen, Romance brought up the nine-fifteen," they would write to the traffic superintendent about it. You would never hear from their lips such comforting words as those with which the Irish porter consoled Miss Katherine Tynan for missing the Dublin mail: "It's the most punctual thrain in Europe—and a great inconvaynience to the thravellin' public." In Ireland the problem of transport is handled with imagination and humour. The trunk systems may, and often do,

approximate to the British model ; but the branches, and still more the light railways, go figuratively as well as literally on their own lines. In former years I used to journey by one of these that boasted two engines and ten carriages (including four first-class compartments recognisable as such by the labels), and yielded not a whit to the L.M.S. in independence of spirit. As the driver approached a station he would look forward to see if there was any one on the platform who seemed to want to get on, and backward in case an opened and flapping door showed that some one wanted to get out ; and if he drew blank in both directions he would not trouble to stop. Mr Arnold Bennett says that the best European trains start with the imperceptible stealthiness of a bad habit. These did not. They went off with a spine-jarring series of concussions ; and though the driver rarely forgot to sound his whistle, the idea usually occurred to him only when he was well under way. He would then conform to etiquette by clapping on his brake, whistling, and beginning a new set of dislocations. A farmer made a bet that he would ride a horse from one end of the line to the other in less time than the train took for the trip. He lost by four or five minutes, but only because the driver had been given an interest in the wager, and cut out all the intervening halts.

An American visitor arrived at the outlying terminus by the mid-day express (a purely courtesy title), and interrogated the ticket collector as to the hours at which he could return. He was told

that the express which left at half-past two was the last departure for the day. This did not suit his convenience, so he unearthed the fugitive and cloistered station-master from his lair, and asked him to name a price for a special. As soon as the station-master recovered from this unprecedented rush of trade to the head he fixed five pounds as reasonable compensation, which the American agreed to, and withdrew about his business. Towards six o'clock he burst through the barriers again to find his special waiting for him; and something familiar in its aspect and that of the dumb patient faces he saw inside it, roused a suspicion which he speedily confirmed: they had kept back the two-thirty.

Nor have these old-world habits vanished altogether even now. Last Christmastide a lady I know reached the junction to discover the local train already crammed with holiday-makers full of what Mr Emanuel Pyecroft describes as "juice de spree." She approached the station-master, who listened to her plaint with the effusive courtesy of a man who has been honouring the holy season in the customary fashion. "Now it's all right, ma'am," he said, soothingly, as one placates a troublesome child by offering a sweetmeat. "I'll put ye in a second-class carriage—out of the way of thim noisy thirds."

"But I've a first-class ticket," she protested.

"Begob ye have!" he admitted handsomely after inspection, scratching his head in the momentary indecision of a Mussolini. Then he went to the first-class compartment, the most tightly crowded

on the train. "Some of yez 'll have to get out," he ordered. "There's a woman here wid a ticket."

To an ex-District Inspector of Constabulary in the west of Ireland I am indebted for another unexpected solution of a practical difficulty. For many years Jem Doolan had borne, with some occasional abuse, the grand old title of "habitual drunk and disorderly" in Moryaveena. On the second Wednesday of every month he was brought before the local magistrate and fined five shillings, coupled with a severe reprimand and a warning about what would happen if he erred in the same way again; and having paid his fine, he would return to the bosom of his family and start once more putting penny upon penny until he had amassed the just sum necessary for his next appearance in the following month. On one occasion, however, this decent ritual was interrupted. The magistrate, who was in both a hurry and a bad temper, told Jem that he was incorrigible (which was true), and that as previous leniencies had produced no amendment in him, he would now be fined ten shillings or go to jail for a fortnight (which was a *non sequitur*). Aghast at this sudden change in a tariff hallowed by the wisdom of ages, Jem ran over some of the excuses customary at such crises, but his artless eloquence was loud in vain. The magistrate had a day's fishing to attend to, and telling Jem, "We've had enough of yer play-actin', so we have; a fortnight in jail 'll do ye a power of wholesome," he rose from the Bench and walked down the Court. Jem ran after him, seized him by his coat-tails, and begged his Honour

to go so far, anyhow, as to give him time to raise the money. "Isn't it all the time in the wurruld I'm givin' ye?" retorted his Honour, rightly and indignantly struggling to be free. "Leggo, I'm tellin' ye!" But Jem still hung on, and his Honour's rage found vent in a powerful short-arm jab which concluded the whole matter by stretching his man full length on the floor.

Undeniably it went well with the audience; there was an instant hush such as greets the supreme effort of the virtuoso. But some of those present, including the District Inspector and the slightly abashed and repentant magistrate, felt that laudable and even brilliant as the coup might have been in itself, it was possibly a trifle stronger than the circumstances warranted.

Then the Head Constable plunged into the arena. Picking up Jem in his entirely capable arms, he shook him like a carpet, rushed him to the door, and despatched him down the steps with a valedictory kick. "I'll have ye in jail if I catch ye round here again," he thundered. "I'll larn ye to be hittin' the magisthrate!"

The tension relaxed. The magistrate, accepting peace with honour, strolled out, and the congregation dispersed with a new story to tell, while the District Inspector went over to thank the Head Constable for his impromptu display of tact and presence of mind. "I'm very much obliged to you," he said. "You got me out of a very awkward corner. Some one would have been sure to talk, and I'd have had to take some sort of official notice of it."

"Don't mintion it, sorr," replied the Head Constable. "I've been twenty years in the foorce, and I've always found the quietest way was the best in the ind."

Truly, it was after this style that the Royal Irish Constabulary governed the country in the old days, and on the whole they did it justly, wisely, and humorously, without too much insistence on the letter of the law, or too rigid an observance of minor regulations if it was probable that no great injury would result from their breach. Constables and Sergeants alike have politely stepped off the footpath into the mire to let me cycle past without discomfort; and I was always rewarded with a pleasant, "Thank ye, sorr—it's soft weather we're havin'," when I reciprocated the compliment to policemen themselves on the forbidden ground . . .

Of course I am writing of the 'eighties and 'nineties, when, if you were a cyclist, you were also a pioneer. You explored villages forgotten in the wilderness where your advent was the first breath of the nineteenth century that the inhabitants had ever got. You were an object of interest to be stared at and criticised and talked about for weeks after. "Musha, look at the young frog on the shovel!" floats into my memory as a contemporary tribute to my then youthful profile crowning an 'ordinary' (*i.e.*, a high-wheeled) bicycle. Nowadays you have just as good a chance of being run over in Connemara as in Piccadilly—perhaps a better, for the Celtic atmosphere stimulates a certain jovial abandon at the steering-wheel. A farmer I know was taken out for his

first run in a Ford and began by adjuring the driver to "let the oul' thing rip," but as the speed rose past thirty miles an hour he extended a checking hand and said, "That'll do, misther, that'll do. . . . Don't put me out of consate wid me little ass." Cyclists, no longer peering ahead to choose whom they would slay, but glancing timorously behind to escape being butchered, have been put thoroughly out of conceit with their machines. In my youth we were the fastest things on the highway. We had our own troubles to contend with: roads were bumpy, saddles were hard and the pneumatic was unknown; tyres worked loose, and you descended a hill, unable to regain control, with a whirling tail of red rubber lashing at you like a Cossack's knout; spokes broke in the hub, and men whose piety could be proved upon them by good witnesses swore as if they had made a special study of the art, while they tried to straighten a buckled wheel by jumping on it. But despite the drawbacks, even when cultured persons sneered and rude boys threw mud at us, it was worth while to be a cyclist, to be young and free of the entire countryside. "Cork's own city and the blue sky over it and the days that were—eyah, the days that were!"

As I was saying, however, before I wandered down a seductive by-path, the Royal Irish Constabulary provided the sort of Government that Irishmen really understand and enjoy: an easy go-as-you-please rule under which, when you were in minor difficulties with Authority, you went to somebody who knew Somebody, and the matter

was adjusted to the satisfaction of all concerned. They saw that the proper persons were put in jail at the proper time, and that reputable citizens could go about their business or their pleasure undisturbed—even at elections and wakes if, as Mr Robey expresses it, " they tempered their hilarity with a modicum of restraint." The Sinn Feiners brought that epoch to a close with another paradox, for under their régime the respectable classes were most likely to furnish a murderer, and the ordinary petty criminals became, by contrast, law-abiding. " What do the polis mean by shuttin' down Baldoyle Races ? " asked an indignant sportsman. " Sure the fellas that do be puttin' their bit on a horse don't want to be killin' anybody, barrin' an odd bookie or two. It's the Nashnal Lib'rery they ought to be watchin', for it's full of long-haired poets that 'd stick a knife in ye as soon as look at ye, if they thought ye knew less Irish than they did—or more, for the matther of that." There was icy truth beneath the fun of a playlet I saw a couple of years ago at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, in which Mr ' Jimmy ' O'Dea delightfully represented a red-hot revolutionary, eager to use his gun in support of the Republic, who, on the arrival of the ' Black and Tans,' realised that he was " more in the litthery end of the movement." The change in the established order of things bewildered even some of the faithful. " Do these insthructions about attackin' barracks and shootin' polismen come from Headquarters ? " demanded a zealous but unenlightened Sinn Feiner. " Because if they're not official, it's murdther, an' if they

are, why aren't we shootin' somebody hereabouts ? "

Not all the rulers that were sent to us by Great Britain appreciated the value of a little judicious inconsequence as did the Royal Irish Constabulary. John Morley (as he was when he reigned over us) intended honestly, I believe—so far as a politician can have any honest intentions—to do his best for Ireland according to his lights. His political creed made him politically popular, and for all I know he may have been welcomed as a mad wag in his own social circles, but he was not personally liked as Mr Balfour was liked by people who hated his politics. I suspect that Mr 'Tim' Healy's nickname, 'the Grand Old Maid,' hit off Morley's fundamental weakness. If one may judge by his books, he felt, like many conscientious agnostics, that he must testify to his creed by being a little more respectable than the orthodox ; and the passion for propriety growing more baleful than alcohol, he upheld righteousness so heavily and made decency so formidable that his Irish audiences had no difficulty in seeing how much, how very much, could be said for wine, women, and song.

General Nevil Macready was an instance outside of politics. " Mac. reasons awfully straight," grumbled one of his subordinates, finding a defect in what the General, no doubt rightly, regarded as a virtue ; and I cannot but think that a little more indirectness of mind would have placed him in better harmony with his surroundings. Possibly he would not agree ; for in his 'Annals of an Active

Life' he observes that the Irish have no sense of humour. Wit, of a sort, he might allow them, but humour, no—a thousand times, no. The remark is not to be counted amongst the General's happiest efforts, and it is obviously open to several interpretations; but the least controversial is to treat it as one of those sweeping verdicts already mentioned which must be reversed on appeal, and yet carry enough truth to be pungently irritating to the persons concerned. No one ever admitted willingly and with candour that either he or his nation had no sense of humour; although we all have dismal knowledge of worthy people who insist on giving us every particular of an anecdote except the point, and when they recover from their merriment, bewail the inability of their audience to savour the jest. Lack of humour is, indeed, betrayed more cruelly by what a man thinks laughable than by what he does not. I remember a gentleman, tolerably bemused with liquor, lurching into the Theatre Royal in Dublin during the performance of a Shaw play—probably under the impression that he had reached the Tivoli Music Hall adjoining. As the piece progressed he shifted about restlessly in his place, and was clearly labouring under some grievance unknown to his neighbours. At last he could contain himself no longer, and burst forth in husky indignation to the world at large. "D'ye call this a play? The las' time I was here I saw a fat fella an' a tall thin fella slappin' him in the stummuck wid a walkin' stick—that was a gran' play . . ."

However, I wander from the General's comment.

The first thing to be said in its favour is that, just as there are many Englishmen and even many Scotsmen who have no sense of humour, so there are many Irishmen to whom a joke is no laughing matter. In Irishmen, moreover, that special sense, though it may be normally acute, is liable to temporary but complete eclipse, particularly if it comes into contact with political interests. I have repeatedly heard Irishmen jeering with gusto and discrimination at oratorical flights which a few hours before had intoxicated them to the pitch of martyrdom or murder.

Then, again, we must remember that the General's presence in Ireland synchronised with a hectic period in our national history, when a sharp perception of the ludicrous was less often useful than a quick finger on the trigger. For years the Government had been teaching the Irish people, by the simplest practical lessons of the kindergarten, that the shortest way to get what they wanted was over the congenial highroad of assassination. Unkind things would be said about them in Parliament; they would be denounced; they would be told that they had forfeited all claim on England's sympathies; they would be warned that they must not think they could terrorise the British Government; and then the rebuke would be softened by the discovery that something must be done to remedy injustices so great as to provoke a naturally peace-loving race to violence and crime. What both Macbeth and the next Irishman you meet would call "bloody instructions, which, being taught, return to plague the inventor," are

just what the Irish are most ready to assimilate; nor were they unmindful of the tactics of the suffragettes who had achieved their ends by burning houses, destroying letter-boxes, and throwing brick-bats at Cabinet Ministers. If I may tamper with Mr Chesterton's eulogy of the Salvation Army, I should say that it is always doubtful whether political agitation is right, but any Irishman can see that throwing brick-bats at Cabinet Ministers must be right; so I venture to suggest that the failure of the Sinn Fein party to join in the laugh when the joke was against them may not have been due altogether to native lack of appreciation. They had an instinct that the time could be more profitably employed in shooting the General's officials. The event has proved the soundness of their logic, upon which, nevertheless, I have no wish to dwell. Let me return to the gaiety and value of nonsense.

The Irish Bull, our leading article for the export trade, is not what it is sometimes imagined to be, a reckless adventure in the insane; it is usually the offspring of a mixed metaphor, and its characteristic is the clash of two ideas, the words looking one way and the thought another. It is no more peculiar to Ireland than a potato. Within the last twelve months I had occasion to point out to the literary editor of a pontifical English weekly paper that a review in the current issue had reached a triumphant close with four mixed metaphors in its concluding sentence. So far as my experience went, it was a record last-wicket stand; but I hinted that it might be as well to be more economical

of such bravura passages in future. He retorted crushingly that the mixture of metaphors—or rather, as he very justly corrected me, "the synthesis of senses"—was quite deliberate, and that any one who loved Japanese prints would understand what was meant. I was too intimidated by the synthesis of senses and the Japanese prints to say out what was in my mind; and my study of other compositions from the same hand led me to accept without demur the author's belief in the virtue of mixed metaphors; but I stammered something to the effect that clearness of intention was not usually regarded as a sound apology for an Irish Bull—even by lovers of Japanese prints. To this he replied that I did not know good English when I saw it; and so, in all love, we parted. But I am still unrepentant enough to believe the distinction of an Irish Bull to be that its meaning can be divined but cannot be construed, as in the war-time utterance of another English weekly: "We must leave no stone unturned to secure the mastery of the air," or the eulogy pronounced by a still more academic journal over a dead leader, "He always kept a firm grasp of the wider vision," or the touching appeal of the missionary who said that the great heart of China was holding out both its hands to us. My richest discovery of this sort was in the London Letter of a Belfast newspaper in August 1926: "When the game had reached its lowest ebb, Grimmett and Mailey literally pulled it out of the fire, and demonstrated once more the value of keeping a stiff upper lip." This, I felt, was true eloquence:

the figure of pulling the ocean out of the flames with a stiff upper lip is a creation racy of the soil; but the choice of the one apposite word "literally" to give it life has, as Dr Johnson remarks, "a beauty pecular to itself, and must be numbered amongst those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit or labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry."

In day-to-day speech such turns of phrase are fairly common, and I still retain a delightful memory of the new recruit to my first office who told us "The best pinny tin whistle I iver had was a brass wan I paid sixpence for." On his arrival in Dublin he saw for the first time the type of Georgian house that had a broad flight of stone steps ascending to the front door. "Them are quare houses ye have in this town," was his reaction. "Look at them wans with the ground floor upstairs!" Once he was seen struggling with a door-knob that turned round futilely in his hand. "The screw in it isn't there," he explained. We were discussing why, according to the actuaries, there is very little change in the expectation of life between the ages of sixty-five and seventy, but as he saw the problem, it presented no difficulty: "It stands to reason if ye live to sixty-five, ye're more likely to live longer than if ye died before that."

When my dentist is not telling me something like "We'll extract this bicuspid, and if the pain continues we'll know it is the front incisor that is causing the trouble," he often mitigates his ghoulish activities with an anecdote; and from

his collection I am permitted to take one sample. A patient into whose tooth he was putting some creosote remarked: "That tastes like the smell you see in a railway station." I think that anybody who remembers the old mephitic Underground will appreciate the synthesis of senses.

These are all on the plain track of the Irish Bull; let me jot down some specimens of the type that achieves a subtlety mere logic could not give. An accomplished lady, whom I am proud still to number amongst my friends, is proficient at this, as at most other modes of expression. "I like Englishmen's humour; it's slow and penetrating; it doesn't scintillate like ours when nobody knows what we mean," is her contribution to the general topic under discussion. "A. B. knows too much about women to understand them," was her summary of a nine-carat philanderer; and I have heard her short-circuit a contentious bore with: "For the sake of argument I agree with you." Her husband's obdurate indifference to the state of his clothes made her put me under strict orders to escort him to the nearest hatter and see that he got the proper sort of hat. On our return it was produced for her inspection and approval. "I'd like it whether I liked it or not; but I *do* like it," was her glad judgment.

I contend that these sayings are lucid, although the sense does not lie upon the surface of the words; but there is also inherent in the exasperating charm of Ireland an inconsequence so complete that it discloses no purport whatsoever; and in the face of this we can but imitate Shakespeare, who, as

Matthew Arnold assures us, under similar provocation, smileth and is still. A well-loved Dublin Civil Servant, whom I shall disguise under the name of Corrigan, was sitting in an almost empty tram, when the occupant of the opposite corner leaned forward and said, with elaborate politeness but slightly maudlin speech: "Shcuse me, sir—am I in thish tram?"

Corrigan certified that he was, and for a few moments he seemed satisfied; but then some brooding suspicion drove him ("drunk I may be, but always the gen'leman") to a second urbane question: "Shcuse me, sirr—how d'ye know I'm on thish tram?"

"Because I saw two of your friends helping you on, and the conductor pushing you into your seat."

That, again, appeared conclusive, and silence followed; but the seed of doubt was still there, and it blossomed in the final unanswerable query: "Shorry for troublin' you, sirr—but d'ye mind tellin' me—how d'ye know I'm me?"

During the war I was equally baffled by an inquiry from County Cork which reached me in one of the rationing Departments: "When I am not at home and not anywhere else, I cater for myself. What am I to do?" Out of all the golden resources of the English language an Irish colleague, to whom I showed the letter, picked the unique word for apt reply: "Quite!"

Later, when I was trying to live an upright life under the shadow of the Health Insurance Acts, I was once called to see 'a Public'—the natural

enemy of all Civil Servants—who was in some tangle which the regular interviewing clerk could not unravel. In a hurried whisper the clerk told me he had failed to make out what the trouble was, but the visitor was Irish (which would account for anything), and I (presumably as hailing from the same asylum) might be able to establish contact. Thus briefed, I opened with the usual question from the unpublished Conversational Phrase-Book for Pilgrims in Health Insurance: "What was the date of the last stamp on your card?"

"I never had a card stamped."

My mastery of the technique of the business showed me, almost without effort, that this poor man's employer had been neglecting his duty, and, turning mentally to the section headed "Non-Compliance," I produced another appropriate question: "Where were you last employed?"

"I was never employed anywhere."

This was a contingency for which the far-sighted constructors of the code had provided; so I said, sympathetically but firmly: "Well, you're not in insurance."

"The divil I'm not! Thin what the blazes have yiz been doin' with my money?"

Had I been on my native soil I daresay I might have hit on some unsolicited repartee which would either have silenced our client or led to a free fight; but in the more restrained atmosphere of Great Britain we were taught to follow St Paul's directions ("Giving no offence in anything that the Ministry be not blamed") and I had to taste the bitterness of defeat. The demand had no relev-

ancy, and yet it was delivered with so much conviction that I felt it appealed, not altogether in vain, to some transcendent justice above the quibbles of logic. "I'd nivir think of such a thing," I heard one Irish girl say to another. "Ah thry—for imaginement's sake!" urged her companion. Whether "for imaginement's sake" or to escape the importunate pressure of reality, most Irishmen can enter at will those Fortunate Isles of the mind where "falls not hail or rain or any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly"; where all things are relative beyond the dreams of an Einstein: where any pleasant absurdity is coherent and any comforting sophism persuasive. How is it possible for matter-of-fact dwellers in the Actual to rationalise the visions of inhabitants of that country to attain which "you keep going on and on until you never get there?"

CHAPTER II.

SLAVES OF THE STATE.

"A man who proposes to become a first-class clerk in a Government Department is required to prove himself intelligent and well educated. How much more intelligent, how much better educated, should be the member of Parliament who makes the laws that are administered, not in one but in all the Departments? In actual fact, however, an average member of Parliament is less intelligent and incomparably worse educated than the average Civil Servant."—ALDOUS HUXLEY.

"If some of God's creatures have brains like dried peas and no imagination at all, the best of us are not so very wonderful."—E. V. LUCAS.

ABOUT the middle of last century the Dublin Post Office was looking for more accommodation, and sent a surveyor to examine Aldborough House, which happened then to be on the market. As he did not approve of it, his report, which was chiefly a summary of its defects, ended with the words: "In short, this is adapted only for what it was —the town residence of a great country family. There is nothing whatever about it to suggest a Government office except the motto over the wrought-iron gateway: 'Otium cum dignitate.'"

The aptness of the motto must have triumphed

over the drawbacks of the architecture, for it was leased by the Post Office and used as a Stores Branch. Many other Government Departments in Dublin occupied what had originally been private abodes. The Education Office was in Tyrone House, formerly the property of the Dukes of Leinster; the General Register Office in Rutland Square usurped the place that had belonged to the friend of Grattan and Johnson, "the virtuous and accomplished Charlemont"; the Department of Agriculture was progressive and co-operative in a row of fine Georgian buildings in Merrion Street; and across the way the Irish Land Commission functioned in Mornington House, once the home of the Wellesleys. It was a stately old mansion, with reception rooms that would have been in harmony with a palace and attics that would have disgraced an artisan's dwelling. There I also served when I only stood and waited on the great landing to get the Judge to sign important documents, and there I dreamed of the grand lords and dames who had thronged the noble staircase and danced minuets in the magnificent ballroom. What, I wondered, would they say if they could see their florid stuccoed walls defaced by splashes of ink, and their Italian ceilings grimed with the smoke and dust of four uncleansing generations? How would they bear the clatter of clerks where Lord Mornington had composed contrapuntal glees, and the thresh and roar of typewriters where the Marquess Wellesley had meditated his Latin elegiacs? Were their ghosts to revisit the scene now, they might be even more astonished at the spectacle of bureau-

cratic Young Ireland bankrupting its knowledge of Gaelic with 'A chara' at the beginning of letters, and 'Misa le meas' at the end.

The august head of the Land Commission was 'The Judge'—a semi-mythical figure that nobody outside a privileged circle was allowed, except on an emergency, to behold with the naked eye. It was generally believed that when he appeared in public the fire-alarm rang of its own accord, and the Chief Clerk went on sick leave, and messengers fell dead from shock in the hall; but after the lapse of years I, even I, was admitted into the presence of the fourth of the dynasty and found him a sportsman, a humourist, and very much a gentleman. I was drawn to partner him for a golf foursome, and as we went out to play I asked one of our opponents, in a stage whisper, what I ought to say if I missed a short putt. He countered with a more difficult query: what ought I to say if the judge missed a short putt? "That's easy," cut in the Judge. "He'll say, 'Oh, well tried! Hard luck!'"

The judicial dignity manifested itself more apprehensively to mankind in the form of three Commissioners, of whom the first was rather deaf, the second very irritable, and the third much occupied with business that took him away from the office. They were consequently a difficult tribunal to appear before. As a President of the Irish Incorporated Law Society remarked: "One can't hear, one won't hear, and one isn't here." The deafness of the first Commissioner was equalled by that of the Secretary, Sir John Franks; and since each

was very conscious of the other's infirmity and did his best to surmount it, the reverberations of their friendly chats rolled through the partitions and echoed along corridors and awakened drowsy clerks in the distant solitudes of the Record Office. Sir John's speech decayed with his hearing until it grew so thick that a stranger could rarely make out what he meant by his hoarse mutterings and friendly growls. This trouble was not without strategic compensation if persons with a grievance had to be interviewed; but to facilitate the exchange of ideas, when he wanted to, he carried a speaking-tube which was so like a stethoscope that it sometimes led to misapprehensions. For example, a new messenger who thought he was summoned for another medical examination opened his waistcoat, clapped the mouthpiece against his chest, and repeated, " Ninety-nine . . . ninety-nine . . . ninety-nine. . . ."

Shortly after my own appointment to the Land Commission, and before I was introduced to the Secretary, I fell a victim to the same accursed instrument. Commissioner Wrench had told me to collect some papers which he would leave for me, over-night, on his desk; and a faithful charwoman, who caught me obeying orders, promptly reported to Sir John that there was a thief stealing documents in the Commissioner's private room. A few seconds later I was confronted for the first time by my venerable Chief, his whiskers bristling with excitement and his speaking-tube wriggling in his hand. Previously I had thought that the most difficult thing in the world was to explain

why you like what you like to people who do not like it; but I had not thought of the operation of explaining who you are to a person who cannot hear you and whom you cannot hear. I gathered I was to speak through the tube, and I began by roaring down the end dangled under my nose—and in those days I could make my intentions clear across the largest cricket field. Sir John started away as if he had been stung on the ear by a wasp. I muted my voice to a moderately low pressure and explained and explained and explained and apologised for my inability to understand a single word he uttered, until the sweat rolled down my forehead and my eyes glazed with despair. I should probably have given up the vain effort and gone to jail to save further trouble had not a clerk arrived on the scene who knew us both, and I was liberated without a stain on my character.

Commissioner Lynch was the irascible unit of the trio; he was the only man I ever met who could work himself into a hurricane of rage without losing an atom of his dignity. To carelessness and ignorance assuming the airs of knowledge he gave scant mercy, but he had an eminently fair mind. A Catholic himself of ultramontane views, his attention was once called to the unjust dismissal of a Protestant employee by a company in which he was a large shareholder. He descended on a Board meeting, submerged it with the typhoon of his wrath, and had the man reinstated before the dazed directors quite grasped what was happening. He was too explosive to be popular, but he deserved

and won our respect ; and I, personally, had reason to know the kindliness that underlay his grim exterior. The first day I was allowed out after a serious operation, returning health tingled exultantly in my veins, and I wanted to hit somebody just to show how well I was feeling ; but my joy lured me to walk too far, vitality ebbed from me, and I crawled to a bench in St Stephen's Green to rest while I pondered how I could contrive to get home again. Presently Commissioner Lynch hove in sight. He had then passed his seventieth year, and was a very cloud-compelling deity in his own court, where I was only an occasional and inconspicuous attendant ; but he sat down beside me and inquired why he had not seen me for so long. I said I had been ill—I was much too shy to go into details—and he nodded and chatted trivialities for a few minutes. As he got up he remarked : " I fear I'm beginning to feel my age. . . . Would you mind seeing me as far as the gate ? " And tucking his arm beneath mine under the pretence of needing my support, he helped me to the entrance of the Green, where he put me into a cab and sent me home. He was a Sahib. May the earth lie light upon him.

It was my privilege to open the morning correspondence on the very spot where Arthur, Duke of Wellington, was born, but I cannot say that the association influenced me for good so much as doubtless it ought to have done. In fact, we never heard anything about the Iron Duke except when Green, the Assistant Secretary, brought some visitor to be edified with the sight of ' the Jook's

room' ; and these entertainments were not favoured by the staff. Green, I am afraid, was not naturally amiable, and though on such occasions he tried hard to appear so, he only looked as if he were trying hard : he put on a ferocious camaraderie which those who knew him in his ordinary form found difficult to relish. He was a man of distinguished appearance, and, to that extent, fitted for his favourite rôle of Le Grand Monarque, in which he was so very Olympian that when he fell seriously ill and was out of the office for six months, the juniors felt that much had been done to restore their waning belief in the over-ruling justness of Providence. His sluggish tenacity bore him with credit, however, through the tangles of the change in Government and the bullying insolence he received from the new rulers of the Irish Free State. To me he was not unkind and rarely uncivil ; and with all his pose of distinction and his habit of doing unnecessary things in a dramatic manner (" Goin' about houldin' up the roof," grumbled his factotum), he had not altogether lost the common touch, and could behave like a human being when he chose. Let me give an example.

At the end of the month, when salaries are paid and the Civil Servant responds to the momentary lull in the harsh struggle for existence, a colleague of mine went to cash his cheque at Delahunty's, the local publican, who acted as banker for the thirstier members of the staff. " Drink takes men in various ways," says Mr Jacobs, " and the way it took Peter was to make him one of the most

obliging men that ever lived." The way it took Rory (as I shall call him) was to make him develop a most tender conscience about his work. Each succeeding glass of whisky gave greater strength to his moral purpose, and he began to form grandiose schemes of dealing in a fluent and broad-minded fashion with the files that were accumulating on his desk. Unlike Gibbon's tutors, he realised that he had not only a salary to receive but a duty to perform. I was not altogether surprised, therefore, about three o'clock that afternoon, to hear a curious scrabbling noise at the door of my room, as of one trying to gnaw his way through. It opened hurriedly, and Rory swayed inwards, one hand twined round the handle and the other clutching the jamb. There he oscillated for a moment or two, gazed wistfully at his seat in the distant corner far across an expanse of empty floor, barren of even a supporting table, and shook his head like a man mourning over a problem beyond mortal solution. On the outward swing of the pendulum the jamb slipped from his grasp, and the door shut with a bang, followed by what, on the Elizabethan stage, would be described as 'Alarums and excursions. Confused noise without.' I went to investigate, and discovered Rory prone on the landing. He was slightly dazed but very zealous, and it was only with some difficulty that I managed to wean his thoughts from work, for that day anyhow. After making sure that he still knew where he lived, I helped him into a passing tram, with a word of advice not to get out until the conductor pushed him

off, and then I returned to the daily round, the sedentary task, like a Boy Scout with his good deed done. Unfortunately Rory's anti-homing instinct was too strong; for about three hours later, when Green was leaving with the Chief Clerk and the Senior Examiner, they encountered an agitated housekeeper fluttering about a body lying half-way down the stairs, with one arm coiled round a helpful banister.

"Poor Misther Rory must have had a fit," she babbled.

"You're a liar . . . I'm drunk," muttered the scrupulous Rory.

Green turned to the other two. "Remember this is after hours," he said; and the three carried Rory down to the hall, while the housekeeper called a cab, in which he was sent home to repentance and temporary reform.

"No one is ever quite so sober as the individual who is occasionally otherwise," says Dick Phenyl in 'Sweet Lavender'; and you had only to look at the drawn misery on Rory's face when he was recovering from one of his bouts to see that nobody could understand his degradation better than himself. He was fundamentally a gentleman, capable of depths of shame, and at such times those who knew him best left him alone. By ignoring the past they gave him what little help they could to restore his confidence and self-respect. So supported, he often fought down his demon for six or eight months at a stretch, and then—desire and opportunity coming together—he would get slightly tipsy. If no comments were

made, he would pull himself up, and all would be right for another long interval; but sometimes well-meaning friends with no more sympathetic imagination than a turnip would feel a divine mission to lecture him on the evils of drink. They were convinced that what he needed was to "realise his position," and be told ingenious ways of overcoming his craving for liquor; and thereupon his Irish combativeness would creep out to frustrate them.

"If I were you, my dear fellow," said one of of these morons (I thank thee, America, for teaching me that word), "I'd confine myself to one bottle of stout at lunch . . . Just—One—Bottle—Of—Stout," he emphasised, spacing out the words and punctuating them with nods of his head and stabs with his forefinger, so that Rory could grasp the full complexity of the idea.

"I get you," said Rory. "A drink in time saves two in the pub, eh? . . . But a bird can't fly with one wing!"

A second Good Influence advised him to try acid drops as a sovereign remedy whenever temptation assailed him. "I have great will power over acid drops," answered Rory.

Another of my companions, a veteran of the Boer War, whom as he still contributes to the gaiety of Ireland I shall conceal under the name of Fagan, was the despair of his chiefs through his good-humoured efficiency and regular irregularities. He joined up for the Great War, and Green summarised the official attitude in his farewell speech: "Good-bye, Fagan. I'm sorry to lose you—and

I'm damned glad you're going." On his return, covered with glory, Green gave him a very friendly welcome, and assured him that so far as the office was concerned, bygones would be bygones. Then he added musingly, "With all the fellows we've had in the Engineers, I suppose there'll be a tunnel cut to Delahunty's some of these days."

"Yus!" said Fagan, reporting the interview to his friends in the warm Cockney accent he had acquired on active service. "And Green knows as well as anybody that there's just three of us in the Engineers: Grew, who ain't back; and Thompson, who's a blinkin' teetotaler; and me. . . . Tunnel to Delahunty's! . . . Ho, yus!"

Fagan's nominal chief was a barrister, whom he could not bring himself to regard with the reverence due to his legal status. "I think Mulligan is getting worse," he confided to me. "When he first came, he knew the difference between a Vesting Order and a bit of blotting paper. Now he'll sign anything that's shoved under his nose except a cheque. If he'd only a little more brains, he'd be half-witted."

To them, for the performance of the sad mechanic exercise involved in their duties, was added a boy copyist. Boy copyists, a race now extinct, had their niche in the official hierarchy as persons upon whom you could lay the blame of missing documents; for if a boy copyist had a chance to lose anything, he certainly lost it. But by process of time they became men and drifted away, and others served in their stead; and after one of these transitions Fagan and his chief were saddled with

a lachrymose youth who seemed to suffer from a perpetual cold in the head. The scratch of his pen only partially cloaked a suctional sniff produced steadily at half-minute intervals until Mulligan felt that unless something drastic was done without delay, he would have to put up his name at a good lunatic asylum. Always mindful, however, of the great traditions of his profession, he approached the subject with all the delicate indirectness of a Southern Irishman. "That's a nasty catarrh you have, my boy," he said.

"Phwat's that, sor?" gasped the boy, omitting a sniff in his astonishment.

"I said you had a severe cold in the head."

"I have that, sor. . . . I think it's wearin' thim collars I'm not used to does be givin' it to me."

"Oh . . . well, you really ought to take a cure for it. Couldn't you get a chemist to give you lozenges . . . or . . . or something, at lunch-time? You must look after yourself, you know. . . . Can't afford to be ill at your age . . ."

The boy promised to attend to the matter, and resumed his work and the sniffs simultaneously, but lunch-time produced no change in the performance, which continued from day to day thereafter, despite renewed hints and more amateur medical advice. At length, despairing of results from his own efforts, Mulligan called in Fagan as consultant. "I wish you'd speak to the boy about that distressing habit of his," said he. "Can't you approach him tactfully when I'm out of the way and get him to try to stop it?"

Fagan said he would do his best, and Mulligan

departed. When he returned, a grateful silence reigned in the room, and remained unbroken, save for the low rasping noise of attorneys filing affidavits at the counter next door, until Fagan left on a few days' leave, whereupon a hurricane of sniffs broke loose, and Mulligan fled to confide his woes to the office at large. At the first opportunity after Fagan came back I asked him what he really had said to the boy. " Me ? " he answered. " Oh, I told him : ' Look here, you dirty-nosed young blighter, if you don't stop that damned snuffling, I'll knock the blinkin' head off you.' "

Violence hath her victories not less renowned than tact.

The Land Commission being a legal office, we had on the establishment a multitude of counsellors, in not all of whom was there wisdom. Though many of our barristers were men of ability and knowledge in their profession, some of them were limbs of the law that might well have been amputated. They were much better acquainted with bookies than with books, and had never seen a brief nearer than in the hands of the prosecuting counsel on a judgment summons. One of the less erudite to whom I chanced to mention that I had been at the ' Elijah ' the night before, remarked : " That's another of them Bernard Shaw things, I suppose ? "

" What's a kimmera ? " he inquired on a different occasion.

" What's a what ? " said his companion.

" A kimmera. Here it is in the paper—c h i m a e r a."

"Dash it, don't you know the thing you take photographs with?"

"Oh . . . I didn't know that you could spell it that way." And he returned, perfectly satisfied, to his reading.

Another of our legal advisers—let me call him Snooks—was a genial, boisterous, foul-mouthed, but likeable barbarian, whose talk was moulded on the traditional style of our Army in Flanders. Every noun he uttered carried with it an adjective implying moral obliquity or eternal condemnation. Presumably he had picked up this lurid idiom for the sake of the immediate picturesque, but he had long ceased to attach any meaning to it, as became clear when he reported casual sayings of his mother, the most decorous of old ladies, in terms that would have been thought unseemly under the Regency. ("By ——, Jack, you'll —— well never get married; you're too —— comfortable as you are," was his version of one of her milder comments.) His trick of larding his speech with the limited pleasantries of the brothel rather spoiled my taste for other, more fertile, inventors of obscenity. Against the monotonous mud of his background the sprightliest efforts of their genius left me unmoved. But by contrast, when the whirligig of time brought me to an office that favoured a paler tint of expletive, I soon noticed myself blinking at the impact of the tamest profanity. If sudden provocation goaded my new chief into ejaculating a hasty and regretted "Dear me!" it curdled my blood as if he had sworn me a woundy oath.

Like many Irishmen with a smattering of education, Snooks had a fondness for adventures amongst words he did not quite understand and into languages with which he was imperfectly acquainted, and this dragged him at times through the deep waters of affliction. One afternoon he returned from lunch with his usually cheery face clouded by some perplexing sorrow. He brooded over it in silence for a while, and then came across to my desk. "Look here," he began. "You're a readin' man . . . what's an aphrodite?"

I did not know what *an* aphrodite was, but I explained that Aphrodite was the name the more ignorant Greeks bestowed upon the Goddess of Love.

"Holy Cripes!" he gasped. "I thought it was the French for a cocktail."

I hazarded 'apéritif' as a plausible substitute, and his countenance cleared. "I knew it was somethin' like that," he exclaimed. "Sure, there's nothin' in that to laugh at?"

I agreed that the difference was too trifling for merriment, and pressed for further details.

"It was like this," said he. "I was passin' the Shelbourne Hotel and I met a couple of girls from the Tennis Club. One of them's the daughter of that French professor—you know the fella that delivers lectures and writes poetry and sells potatoes and things like that—and I thought the least I could do was to say somethin' pleasant to her in her own lingo; so I asked the pair of them to come and have an aphrodite with me, and they burst out gigglin' and left me standin' there. . . .

I couldn't see what they were makin' all the nonsense about."

Periodically it was borne in upon him that his labours were not appreciated at their proper worth, and he drew up elaborate reports on the exacting nature of his work, laying particular stress on its steady increase; for to the Civil Servant extra work without extra pay represents the acme of infamy. One of these State Papers alleged that he "prepared fiats and vesting orders ad nauseam"; but his assistant pointed out that it was not the best line of approach to a rise in salary to inform the Heads of the Department that work made him sick. Sick—in the official Pickwickian sense for purposes of a few days' leave—he frequently was, and he rang the changes upon 'bronchitis,' 'neuralgia,' and 'rheumatism' until it was hinted to him that his custom had begun to stale even their infinite variety. "What's a good thing to have when you're feelin' you want a rest?" he asked. "Somethin' that's value for a day or two, without havin' them sendin' the doctor to you?" Laryngitis was suggested and accepted after a cautious inquiry what it meant; and the Establishment Officer was gratified by the usual sick note stating that Snooks was confined to bed with severe meningitis, but would be back again for certain before the end of the week.

Although he toiled not, neither did he spin, he was normally arrayed in a manner that Solomon in all his glory would hardly have dared to emulate. But even in this his carelessness about detail betrayed him. "Ah, look at them toffs!" said

a Dublin working girl to her companion, as Snooks and a friend walked past magnificently.

"Them's not toffs. Them's clerks," said the more observant lady. "Don't ye see the shiny seats on their trousers?"

"That's a good one of Snooks," said a colleague, turning over some of my snapshots. "It's got the very expression he puts on when he's making a joke he's just heard from some one else. Did I tell you we were drawn against each other for the Mixed Doubles at the Lawn Tennis Tournament? He came over to me when we were waiting for a court, and 'Heh!' says he—you know the way he bellows a whisper at you, as if you were a deaf idiot in a boiler factory—'Heh! What's my partner's name? It's —— awkward not knowin' her name.' I told him it was Barbara N——. 'You can't forget that,' I said. 'Think of the old Latin tag: Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferioque prioris——'"

"'Ah yes!' said he. 'Of course! . . . Dear old Horace . . .'"

CHAPTER III.

SLAVES OF THE STATE (*continued*).

"Noble natures have a repugnance from work. Manual labour is servitude. A day of idleness is a holy day."—Sir ANDREW MACPHAIL.

THE Irish Land Commission was, comparatively speaking, a new office, and its organisation was unlike that of the great historical Departments, where the chiefs are generally men of long service, who enjoy in turn their spell of authority and retire to make room for the next generation. When I entered, the higher officials were mostly in the prime of life. They had been appointed to positions of importance sooner than they could have reckoned upon, they had nothing further to look out for except a pension, and they were all growing old comfortably together. The flow of promotion was dammed, vacancies arose only through premature deaths, and almost the sole hope left to the junior clerks was a share of whatever largesse My Lords of the Treasury might think fit to scatter as a by-product of fresh legislation. Since the Treasury had to provide for a large technical establishment of draughtsmen, surveyors, inspec-

tors, solicitors, barristers, and land agents, many of whom received salaries determined by standards rather political or social than commercial, the quantity of largesse left over for the mere clerical residue was not big enough to intoxicate them with delusions of grandeur. An official of first-rate ability might exert all his powers with exactly the same result as if he contented himself with the minimum of effort necessary to keep from being dismissed. In either event, after eight or ten years he would reach the top of his scale, and stop there until sufficient seniors had been considerate enough to die and clear the gangway to the class above. Where the temptation held out to a young man was to work as little as he could and as carelessly as he dared: where the annual increment came alike to energetic Jones and comatose Brown: it was vain to expect that all the clerks would be efficient and all the work good. In the circumstances it was highly creditable to human nature that so many behaved as well as they did. A spirit of compromise prevailed. On the one hand, the Heads of the Department recognised that their underlings had no prospects, and mitigated their plight by an easy discipline—"You won't get any money here, but you'll be treated like a gentleman," said my first chief—and on the other, nine-tenths of the staff enjoyed the compensating liberties without abusing them.

Nevertheless the atmosphere of the place was very favourable to the growth of eccentricity. Men mouldered in forgotten corners, ignoring or missing the amenities open to them, until they

grew rusty, sullen, and mad. The eldest of these troglodytes, by name, I think, Smythe, was a replica of Newman Noggs in everything save cheerfulness and warmth of heart. I can just recall his shambling walk, his collar and coat moss-green with dirt, his unshaven jowl, and particularly his bulbous nose—one of those noses in whose presence you dare not talk of indigestion lest you be thought allusive and ironical. Year after year he copied deeds and recited them to his fellow galley-slave on the bench beside him, and nourished a swelling hatred of all his masters, especially Eland, the Deputy Keeper of Records, to whose spite he attributed his long detention in obscurity. Suddenly he broke his habitual silence to tell his associate, as a casual item of interest, that he was going to shoot Eland. The associate laughed incredulously, and Smythe went on with his engrossing; but at lunch-time he drew twenty pounds from the Post Office Savings Bank and bought a revolver and cartridges. A disappointment awaited his return: Eland was away for the day, and the programme had to be postponed. Smythe was thus at a loss how to fill in his evening, and strolled about town until he saw the announcement of an excursion to London. He bought a ticket and joined the holiday seekers, and is believed to have wandered aimlessly in London until he came across another advertisement of an excursion to Paris, which he also patronised. An unfortunate Frenchman happened to be looking at a shop window opposite the Gare St Lazare when Smythe came out of the station, and without

preamble Smythe walked over and shot him dead. To those who count upon an ordered Universe I leave the task of deducing the connection between the fortuitous Frenchman and an irrelevant maniac six hundred miles away.

It is an adage in the Service that you can bring a clerk to the office but you cannot make him work. "The hardest job in the Land Commission was catching the Attendance Book," said a former room-mate of mine; and I cannot deny that there were members of the staff to whom it was much more important to arrive at the office before 10.15 A.M. than to do anything after they got there. Some were always early; some raised punctuality to such a fine art that on stormy mornings they had to allow a few seconds extra for windage; and some were beaten so often by the clock that when, for the eighth or ninth time in the month they saw the thin red line drawn under their names, and the consequent report to the Secretary looming ahead, they murmured "better never than late," and retraced their steps home, to write politely to the Head of their Branch that they had a severe chill, but hoped to resume duty as usual on Monday.

For three-quarters of the year the majority of us had tasks sufficient to keep us at our desks; but the minority rarely seemed to have anything on their minds beyond "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world," of which Wordsworth so justly complained; and in all sections of the Department the Long Vacation was a halcyon period, when only the temporary

assistants had to make some show of eagerness and despatch lest a worse thing should befall them. "Ye have to keep runnin' round like a terrier," said one of them, "for the bosses know ye have nothin' to do, an' if they saw ye doin' nothin', begob ye'd be sacked." His fears, I am persuaded, were really groundless, because the authorities then were very tolerant of mere idleness.

"Did you hear that X—— has been retired?" I asked a colleague some years later, when the reins had been drawn tighter.

"D'ye tell me so?" he exclaimed. "What undther heaven for?"

"Why, you know as well as I do that he hasn't done a tap of work since he came to the office."

"Ah," said my friend, shaking his head in mournful dissent from the implied inference, "when they want to get rid of a man, they'll jump at any excuse."

Probably he saw further into the causes of things than I did; but in the old days our administrators did not hunt for such paltry pretexts. We had a Thinker amongst us who used to come and think at me about a thesis on Time and Space he was writing for his M.A. degree. As a specialist he was contemptuous of laymen's ideas on the subject; what, he was wont to demand, could a watchmaker—a low mechanic fellow in Clerkenwell, who was occupied with cogged wheels and who busied himself with pinions and whose talk was of ratchets—what could he know of the metaphysics of Time? I, on the contrary, held we had much to learn from our toiling brethren. M.

Bergson has shown us we must regard Time as pure duration; but it is only when you have to deal with the Irish (or even the British) workman that you discover how right he was. If you hire an electrician or a carpenter to do a repair, and you ask him what it will cost, he is apt to reply: "Well, I can't hardly say, sir, till I've got right down to it. It will be mostly Time, that job will"; and when he does get right down to it, you see that it is even so. There is no alien taint of work about it: it is a pure ebbing of the vital *élan*. We had on our roster a second-class clerk, popularly known as 'Nelson,' because he expected every man to do *his* duty. He was unfailing in his anxiety to take up the White Man's Burden and put it on somebody else's shoulders. He was so much *affairé* that he had hardly any leisure to tackle the matters for which he drew his monthly pay, and found a wider sphere of usefulness in swapping dogs, picking up bargains at auctions, and taking uncounted days off to attend race meetings. For the better conduct of his avocations he kept two hats in steady employment, one hanging on a peg in his room to indicate his official presence, and the other to carry with him on his more absorbing engagements round the corner. Consequently it was only when there was nobody at his desk that you could be sure he was supposed to be in attendance; for when he was ill or on leave, his deputy would be there to clear up his arrears. Nevertheless he was so framed in the prodigality of Nature that the sight of unworthy persons treading the paths of dalliance moved him to instant

indignation and rebuke. Once, while thinking out some obscure problem of administration in the quiet depths of our Record Office, he espied a Board of Works labourer sitting on an upturned bucket in a secluded angle of the garden, and pondering on the strangeness of things as he watched the grey smoke curling from his pipe. To discover slackness and admonish it were with 'Nelson' the same thing; and throwing up the window, he demanded in the voice of one having authority, "What is the meaning of this? What are you doing there?"

The labourer spat on the ground with all the quality of spirituelle that is the prerogative of the Dublin working-man, and replied, "The same as yourself, sor—killin' time."

And then the crash of a window abruptly slammed filled our Record Office with confusion.

If I may digress for a brief space, I should like to say that on suitable occasions the Board of Works themselves could make life seem very difficult. One of our Examiners of Title broke the leg of his armchair—whether through long subjection to his fourteen stone of forensic humanity or in the ordinary course of discussion with a solicitor, I do not know—and ordered the Board of Works to make a new one in place of it. Their furniture expert came for more precise directions at an inopportune moment when the Examiner was hearing a case and wanting passionately to know if he were expected to believe an affidavit; and the only help the expert could obtain was an instruction to take the triply condemned thing to

Hades out of that, and make the new chair exactly like it ; and he did—down to the broken leg.

We had at least three variants on the ' Nelson ' theme, who were adepts at the art of creating the pomp and circumstance of toil without actually doing any. There was the passive variety, whose forte was the invincible British phlegm, but who looked always as if they were about to spring at their work. They never did spring, but you felt their latent power : they suggested the Manager of the M.T.S. railway in the fourth reel of an American film, where he seizes the telephone and commands the gate-keeper to flag the 5.50 express before the avalanche destroys the viaduct. Then there was the active variety that bore in mind Disraeli's advice to the Young Man who wanted to Get On—' Bustle about '—and ran upstairs and banged the lids of desks and darted from room to room, leaving at each remove a lengthening trail of official documents. The last variety was the effusive-obsequious that sought the road to promotion through multiplied courtesies to their seniors. Their progress, I am glad to say, was not in advance of their merits. When, for the fourth day in succession, Hugh Pollock, our sardonic Registrar, was helped into his overcoat, had his hat brushed and handed to him, and the door opened for his exit by an exponent of this method, he destroyed an illusion with the melancholy words : " Thank you, Mr So-and-so, thank you very much ; but it's no use. I can't do anything for you."

Of Hugh Pollock " thus presented to my memory, let me indulge myself in the recollection." He was

a cultured man, soured by an early disappointment that made him neglect the welfare of his staff in order to feed fat his ancient grudge against the official mandarins and express his withering sense of their futility. Not being on his staff, I could enjoy without reserve his Himalayan aloofness from routine. I peeped into his room one day to discover him busied with his assistant over some Vesting Order, and was about to withdraw when he looked up and bade me come in.

"It's all right, Mr Pollock—I only came to idle," I apologised, maintaining my retreat.

"Come in," he said again, in the lugubrious drawl he affected. "I love idling . . . Go away, Connor!" he added to his assistant, like a petulant child dismissing its nurse. Connor (a good man, now with God) departed, growling, and Hugh fell to talking about photography, which with etchings and French literature made the real interest of his life. Presently a cheerful whistle sounded in the hall next his room, and he commented: "D'ye hear that? . . . That's Willie (one of the messenger boys) . . . He does that all day . . . and every day . . . except when he takes a rest and plays handball against my door. . . . It's a change from Connor, anyhow. Willie doesn't want me to sign Vesting Orders." His eye fell on the great seal of the Land Commission with the Royal Arms embossed on the parchment. "I never know whether I'm to sign on the Lion or the Unicorn . . . and if I signed on the wrong one, Connor would say it wasn't valid."

"Is there any one with some intelligence in the

Mapping Department ? " he inquired on another occasion as he lounged out of the court-room. " I suppose that is too much to expect of such a being as a draughtsman in such a world as the present ? " I ventured to hope that the resources of the establishment were equal to supplying such a paragon, but before looking for him I wished to know how exactly he could be of service. " The Judge wants a pantograph . . . he won't know what to do with it when he gets it, but he *wants* it. . . . Is that the thing Mephistopheles drew for Faust ? . . . No, that was a pentagram. . . . By all means, get the Judge a pantograph : it'll amuse him more than the counsel learned in the law."

Besides the bright spirits who were far too busy to earn their salaries, and the honest plodding fellows like myself that did everything wrong, we had some venerable survivals of the Old School, who neither did anything nor pretended to do anything. They displayed a mental detachment from the business around them as complete as a chorus lady's in a revue. " Nothing attempted, nothing done, has earned a night's repose," poor Kearney used to chant as he limped out in the evening. Another representative of the veterans' brigade, shortly after his entrance (" Lasciate ogni speranza o voi che entrate "), had maintained that he could not see why, with industry and sobriety and perseverance, any man might not become a Commissioner before he died ; and when I knew him, thirty years on, he was still an Abstractor, and could not see why yet. He was a Conservative in his ideas but a Radical in his spelling, and for

some reason that has slipped my memory he was generally known as 'The Village Idiot.' Whenever a post fell vacant he applied for it, and was astonished at the impudence of every one else in applying for it. He confided to his friends that if any regard were paid to humble merit, proved qualifications, or mere length of service, his claim could not be overlooked; and when the appointment was made, he embodied his protest in a memorial extending to countless typed pages, which was duly acknowledged and filed away to gather dust in some forgotten pigeon-hole. New dynasties rose and fell, men of push and go pushed and went, and even official customs altered, while he alone remained steadfast in a realm of change. Like Dr Johnson, he had no passion for clean linen, and hid his talents in a very dirty napkin. Once he became curious to know why a number of the junior staff were pulling towels out of their cupboards about closing time, and it was broken to him that they had fallen victims to the habit of washing their hands before going home. "Damned fops" was his only comment.

His imitation of a clerk working was not deceptive. The Head of his branch was instructed to get him to prepare a certain schedule that the Secretary wanted in a hurry. After the lapse of some days, the Secretary asked if it were nearly done.

"Well—no, sir," said the Head. "X—— told me he had several cases in hand, and . . ."

"Doesn't he know this is urgent?" broke in the Secretary irritably. "It shouldn't take more

than a couple of hours, and I need it at once. Tell him to put everything else aside and get on with it."

The Head of the Branch passed on the order, but as the schedule still blushed unseen, he was sent for again.

"Has X—— done that yet?" demanded the Secretary.

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"Has he started it?"

"N–not exactly, sir . . . but," added the Head in a burst of optimism, "he's put everything else aside."

Mr Bernard Shaw's theory that the country, not the race, is responsible for the peculiarities of Irishmen derives some support from the ease with which we assimilated the Englishmen and Scotsmen assigned to us. Some of them were so transitory that their natural respectability remained unchecked. They tarried with us for a while, and went forth to adorn Princes Street or Whitehall, where they soared to positions of great eminence, and we heard of them in the presence of kings and behind the puppets of Parliament—benevolent influences working in the Unseen. Most of them, however, fell into our quiet little ways almost at once, and cultivated a nice taste for whisky, and grew expert on 'Current Form at a Glance,' and ripened to a type in no wise distinguishable from the ordinary product of the soil; while a few of them married Irish girls of pronounced views ("Plucked a fair bouquet from the garden of the West," as our eloquent spokesman put it, at the

presentation of the handsomely inscribed clock without which matrimony in the Civil Service would be all but illegal), and reinforced the tradition handed down from Giraldus Cambrensis by becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves. These last were of peculiar interest to me between 1919 and 1922; for I was convinced that if their adopted leaders summoned them to correct my political creed with an automatic pistol, they would let no weakness of friendship stand in the light of duty—although they would doubtless send an expensive wreath to the funeral to show there was no personal ill-feeling; whereas, in similar circumstances, a native extremist could be expected to compromise with his conscience and confine himself to potting me in, say, the leg for old sake's sake.

Alike, however, to aborigines and foreigners, to idle and diligent, to seniors and juniors, if they were on the permanent staff, the Long Vacation came as a season of refreshment in the most comprehensive sense of the word. Of the quieter men, some managed, in Rupert Brooke's phrase, to "spend in pure converse the eternal day," and others took to spelling-bees and novels and poker-dice; while the noisier element found relief in handball and practical jokes. If you filled your kettle from the tap downstairs when luncheon was toward, and a colleague detained you to exchange a merry word on your way back, you would probably not discover why the Brown Windsor was missing out of that room until you took your first sip of tea; from which you learned that it was a

wholesome and blessed thought not to put on the kettle to boil without previously smelling it. Another favourite use for the office soap was to smear the lower ends of ladders up which some portly senior would shortly climb in search of books from the top shelves; but when the ladder slid violently out over the shiny linoleum, it was advisable to follow Rudyard Kipling's advice and "fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run." I was myself a sparing and infrequent cultivator of the practical joke, the essence of which to my mind is malice. Unless the victim is maimed for life there is no real hearty fun. But I must plead guilty to concealing the office poker and tongs amongst the other ironware in the capacious golf-bag of a man who informed us, perhaps a shade too pointedly, that he was going to play a couple of rounds with the Attorney General at Portmarnock. If this should meet his eye, he will understand why his clubs seemed so heavy and the course so long. On the other hand, I was not the culprit that rubbed half a pound of the best white flour into the communal towel with which (in defiance of protests from the other part-owners) he was accustomed to polish his boots; but I remember yet the look of genuine surprise he wore after the first vigorous flick, when the clouds began to thin and he could see the lower ends of his shapely gent's trouserings.

There were points of interest, too, I thought, in the treatment prescribed for a male typist who had shown high promise of graduating as one of our foremost dipsomaniacs. During his absence at

lunch two of his comrades busied themselves with screw-drivers, transposing the type of his machine so that the 'e' key would print, say, 'x,' and so on; the others removed the top of his table, and thus obtained access to the locked drawer where he kept a pocket flask for purposes of reference, replaced its contents with weak tea, and restored the table to its original condition. Lastly, a lump of calcium-carbide from a bicycle lamp was wrapped in a piece of blotting-paper and dropped into his ink-well just as his step was heard on the stairs. He came in, hung up his coat and hat, and had barely sat down when the ink-pot began apparently to resent his presence by bubbling a red foam at him. It took him a minute or two before he could make up his mind whether this morbid phenomenon was subjective or objective, and he gloomed suspiciously at his neighbours, but they were all innocently busy and unconcerned; so at the third attempt, with a staggering hand, he managed to unlock the top drawer and gulp a fortifying mouthful from his flask. This seemed to lack its usual restorative quality; and after a grimace of disgust he set himself shakily to copy the next document on his tray. The machine was of an old pattern with non-visible writing, and it gave him no notice of what was to come when he drew out the completed sheet. He looked at the weird procession of letters, winced, looked at them again with glazing eyes, and went out to sign the pledge.

The cure, I grieve to say, was not permanent; for a few years later I encountered him on the eve

of his holidays, when he was plainly in a condition which in Dublin is described as " not dthrunk, but havin' dthrink taken." He was, he told me, going down to Westland Row Station to see a friend off to England, after which he proposed to join a fishing party in County Wicklow. When he came back to the office and I asked him what the fishing was like, he could recall nothing between the time I left him and the instant when he awoke to find himself inexplicably in the Irish Mail with a half-empty bottle of whisky in one hand and a total stranger's baby in the other.

As well as the idle apprentices who merely existed beautifully during 'the Long,' there were men who " scorned delights and lived laborious days " ; they had solitary jobs in remote parts of the attics, and turned their strategic advantage to account by taking on outside employment. One farmed out his official work to an imported boy at ten shillings per week, and disappeared from the Department's ken directly he had illuminated the Attendance Book with his signature. Unwisely he let his deputy's hire run into arrears, and thus produced an indignant mother clamouring for redress, and he was persuaded to retire into private life. A second struggling soul devoted the lank hours to building up quite a profitable connection in the begging-letter line ; but one thing led to another, and the parting of the ways came in his case also.

H. S. D., most unselfish of friends and staunchest of colleagues, used to divide our microcosm into two classes of " those who point the finger " and " those who strive." Lest you should belong to

the Pharisees and say to yourself "Whitehall was never like this," I append two incidents that provide at the same time a parallel and a contrast.

Early in the present century the Secretary of a London Ministry was showing Sir Robert Morant over their new premises. "This room is vacant at the moment, Sir Robert," said he, throwing open a door on an upper storey; and Sir Robert glanced in to discover a cricket match in full swing. And shortly afterwards the voice of lamentation was heard at Westminster; mourning second division clerks refused to be comforted for their salary increments because they were not.

Now turn to Ireland. The Judge's secretary always used to take his annual leave during the Long Vacation; and since the room next his had a suitable blank wall, it was set apart, informally, for the handball contests. Once, however, the Judge returned unexpectedly for a special meeting, which he held in his secretary's room as his own was in the hands of the painters and decorators. No one had the courtesy to notify the players of this innovation, so the game went cheerfully on, while the Judge listened to legal arguments, punctuated with thuds of a half-solid rubber ball against the partition. I repeat what I said before: he was a sportsman. At the close of the sitting he pressed for an explanation, but when his secretary hazarded the truth, he said only: "Will you please tell the gentlemen that I don't want to interfere with their private amusements; but they will put me under an obligation if they can arrange to hold the final in the Phœnix Park."

CHAPTER IV.

WORKING THE ORACLE.

" Whenever he saw a dollar in another man's hand, he took it as a personal grudge, if he couldn't take it any other way." —O. Henry.

On my way to business I used to pass a small shop over which hung a sign announcing that the owner was a practical chimney-sweeper. This even the wayfaring man might understand. I visualised a practical chimney-sweeper as one who actually swept chimneys, and was thus differentiated from a theoretical chimney-sweeper, who could, perhaps, discuss with ability the ethics and philosophy of sweeping chimneys, or go so far as to offer pertinent remarks on the technique of the art, but did not poke brushes through the vulnerable portions of the kitchen range or sully his intellectual countenance with soot. The term 'practical politician,' which was much more common, was not so easy to interpret. In Ireland we believed it to mean a man who would agree to anything if he saw a couple of thousand pounds at the far end of it for himself; but was our experience wide enough for a generalisation? What,

for instance, did it mean in England? Did it mean a member of Parliament who might be trusted to tell his constituents the truth if it were not inconvenient, or he had not hit upon a good lie that it would be a pity to waste? Was Gladstone a practical politician when he embodied in the Irish Land Act, 1870, proposals which, two months before, he had privately denounced as iniquitous? Mr Wells says that Gladstone "apprehended things romantically, therefore in a manner suited for passionate treatment in large halls"; and this may explain why public disorder did not yield so readily to his facile panaceas as his rhetoric led us to expect. At any rate, whatever may have been the motives behind the first Land Act, it spawned a numerous progeny of agrarian legislation; but at the beginning of this century it became clear that their force was spent while the work was still undone.

Then, under the presidency of Lord Dunraven, followed a prolonged conference between representatives of landlords and tenants. The obstacles to agreement were so many that several times the conference seemed to be on the brink of dissolution, neither party being willing to concede an iota further; but at each deadlock somebody was always inspired to effect a reconciliation by a seasonable idea. He would get up and suggest that the immediate difficulty might be surmounted if the Government found a little more money; and then the dejected faces would brighten, and a delegate on the other side would say that after the statesmanlike utterance to which they had just

listened, he, for one, could not take the responsibility of breaking off negotiations. And so, with goodwill in all quarters, and a bonus of twelve million pounds from the British taxpayer, the Irish Land Act, 1903, came into being.

Up to 1870 the Irish Land System favoured the landlord at the expense of the tenant; from that to 1903 it favoured the tenant at the expense of the landlord; and from that on it favoured both at the expense of the British Government—a compromise thoroughly congenial to Irish sentiment. In the mind of the normal healthy Irishman, when public money is concerned, the words 'loot' and 'graft' have almost sacred associations. There are few hardships he will not gladly encounter, few subterfuges he will not willingly employ, to secure a double portion of it for his friends, his family, or himself. To any one who knows Ireland an illustration is unnecessary—"Hands across the sea and into some one's pockets," says Mr Dooley—but for those who do not, I may be permitted to recall two episodes.

When the late Samuel Watt was in charge of the Old Age Pensions section of the Local Government Board in Dublin, a stranger called to remonstrate with him about the Board's refusal to sanction a pension for an applicant called Kelly. "The man's a namesake of my own, an' I take an intherest in his case," said he, "an' as I'm on the County Council, an' I'm the Chairman of the Local Pensions Committee that went into his claim carefully, an' admitted it, I think I've a right to hear why ye turned it down. I know he's over

the age all right, for I saw his birth certificate meself." Watt agreed about the age, but said it was on the point of means that the claim had been refused. The inspector had reported that although the old man possessed no income or property of any kind, he had a well-to-do son who drove his own motor-car—then a symbol of extreme prosperity in Ireland. " Yes," said Mr Kelly, " I thought as much ; and let me tell ye, Misther Watt, that I know all about that son, meself ; an' I'm not the sort that says things behind a man's back they wouldn't say to his face, but a worse son never disgraced a dacint family. He's been a heart-scald to his father since he was a dirty-nosed little spalpeen ; an' as to givin' the poor oul' man a few shillin's to keep body an' sowl together, he'd let him die in the Union first, so he would. He spends every penny he makes on dthrink, an' wimmen, an' gamblin', an' rattlin' to all the race meetin's in the counthry on his bloody oul' Ford—beggin' your pardon, Misther Watt ; that slipped out on me unbeknownst. But I declare to me God, I haven't education enough to tell ye how bad he is : he's no betther than a common blackguard."

Watt was so moved by the sad earnestness of this appeal that he promised to look into the case again and see what could be done ; and when his visitor left he wrote to the inspector asking if the new data were correct. The inspector replied that Mr Kelly's account was strictly true. It omitted only one detail of some importance : the blackguard son was Mr Kelly himself.

The second example was related to me by an official who was engaged in the administration of the Blind Persons' Pensions Act. " There was one claim we held up, for I had my suspicions that the fellow was a playboy. He used to grope his way into my room with a dog and a stick and talk piety about the good work he was doing in the Mission—not that *that* was evidence against him —but what made me feel he could do with a bit of watching was the way he'd never speak of God like any one else : it was always ' the Masther ' —as if he were an old retainer of the family ! After a while, though, I began to think maybe I was misjudging him, and we allowed the pension ; and about a month or so later, as I was coming down Main Street, I saw my bucko striding along ahead of me with a party from the Mission. And they weren't leading him tenderly by the hand either ! He'd left his property dog and stick at home, and was bowling away like one man, all by himself. . . . When they got to the corner they started to hold a service, and it was my blind pensioner that gave out the hymn ; and, mind you, when he was reading from the book, he didn't bother to look through his spectacles ; he shoved them up on his forehead out of the way, so that he could see better. So I waited until somebody else got a turn and he fell back to his place in the circle, and then I gave him a nudge privately, and says I, ' Hullo, Thompson ! ' (or Saunders, or M'Ginty, or whatever his name was), ' I'm glad your sight's improved since I had the pleasure of meetin' you last.'

"'My name is not Thompson,' says he, as stiff as if he'd been made by the Board of Works out of component parts.

"'Isn't it?' says I. 'Well, in that case, the laugh is on Thompson, for I'm going to stop his pension, and prosecute him for fraud into the bargain'; and I took myself off on my own concerns. But we were busy just then, and as a matter of fact I forgot all about it until a chap in the office came to me and said, 'Here's a funny thing about that blighter Thompson: he has given back his pension book. He says his sight has been restored by a miraculous interposition.' And I told him I'd had a lot of hard things said about me in my time, but nobody ever called me that before."

And I am thereby allured to a digression. In 1920, Templemore, a Tipperary village, suddenly began to occupy columns in the penny papers on account of a reported outbreak of miracles. Certain images of the saints were found spotted with what were supposed to be fresh bloodstains, daily renewed by unseen hands (which were subsequently discovered to be very real and temporal). During the first few weeks of these manifestations hordes of believers came from all over Ireland, and even from Great Britain, to share in the blessings, and thus created one for the local shopkeepers, who dreamed wild dreams of cutting down their overdrafts at the bank. While the wave of prosperity was at its height, a sceptical commercial traveller, after booking an unprecedented order from a publican of the district, asked him in confidence

if the miracles were genuine. "Is it a miracle y' ask me?" exclaimed the publican. "Of course it's a miracle. . . . What else but a miracle would bring thrade like this to Templemore?"

But to return: the Watt episode illustrates another difference between the British temperament and the Irish. When an Englishman goes into a Government office, he is inclined to announce in clear ringing tones that he is a citizen, a taxpayer, a member of the public, and then look round to see if any one wants to contradict him. He imagines, whimsically, that the public have rights, and that he is entitled to his share. An Irishman, being a stern realist, knows that the public have no rights, or that if, theoretically, they may be supposed to have any, they cannot enforce them, which comes to the same thing. He regards the public collectively as something not himself that makes for unrighteousness and delay; and he is pathetically eager to prove that he is a very distinct and superior being: a Poor Law Guardian, or a Trade Union Secretary, or the brother of a well-known racing tipster, or what not. If he satisfies the man behind the counter, he expects to be invited inside away from the common herd, and comforted with a newspaper and a chair beside the fire. Of course, no matter how important and individual he may be in his own eyes, to the clerk in search of the relevant file he is only K49835/28, who wants something done against the rules. But Irishmen have an indomitable belief that all rules can be got round if you know the right person, and generally their

belief is justified by the way it works. A gentleman in Connaught, who was under some obligation to appear in the dock at the next Assizes, approached his friend the Sheriff to discuss the possibilities of a sympathetic jury. The Sheriff had very proper feelings on the subject, but, as he frankly admitted, there were considerations of State that made the request, reasonable as it was, inopportune. "Ye see how it is, Larry," he said. "Iver since that pasty-faced little rat, Doolan, that owns the 'Sintinel' lost his conthract for the printin', he's been itchin' to get a lick at us in that mangy rag of his; he's a powerful shot with a rotten egg, Doolan is, and I don't want to give him a chance of heavin' a sultry wan at me. . . . But I could manage a disagreement, if that 'd suit ye. . . ."

"There is one thing worse than corruption," mourns Lecky. "It is acquiescence in corruption." But the men who have made Ireland what it is to-day held no such visionary and unsocial creed. There have been occasions in the history of Irish elections when every entry on the register meant a vote in the ballot-box, and tombstones were ransacked for names to fill up the lists; and if the sheeted dead did not squeak and gibber in the streets, they helped at least to put down the Hydra-head of Faction by plumping for the popular candidate and a free country. Each side was aware that the other practised this stratagem; neither objected; and both, secure in their powers of self-protection and reprisal, regarded it in the temper of the American's remark to the fussy interloper who pointed out that his opponent was taking

cards from the bottom of the pack: "Well . . . isn't it his deal?"

"How is it," asked a village grocer, "that I, who have lived here for twenty years, couldn't get a spirit licence, and they gave it to you who haven't been a twelvemonth in the place?"

"My dear fellow," replied the successful competititor, "I never knew you were looking for one. Why on earth didn't you tell me, and I'd have lent you my two Justices of the Peace?"

Into such things really well-bred Irishmen never thought of probing, any more than they would have ventured to put awkward questions about trade customs, political funds, or theological mysteries, which are "not to be too closely pried into or too nicely reasoned upon." But sometimes, when a veteran pillar of the party came to reap his reward and entered upon his long rest as Supervisor of Melting at the Tape-and-Sealing-Wax Office, evil-minded busybodies would prime a Member of Parliament to interrogate the appropriate Minister as to why Mr So-and-so had been thus favoured; and the Minister would rise and inform the House that Mr So-and-so had been chosen to fill that important post (which, indeed, had been created for him) on account of his special technical knowledge—knowledge that was absolutely essential to the discharge of its multifarious duties; and only those who knew would know that the special technical knowledge consisted in a happy knack at addressing envelopes. Even nowadays, when I hear that Dail Eireann has voted, without debate, some £50,000 or so to the Secret Service, it rejoices

me to think that the ancient tribal rites are not extinct, and that a few more survivors of the Collins campaign are going to spend their declining years in well-earned freedom from sordid cares.

Most branches of sport were carried on guilelessly enough, but not all. I am not referring to that stout-hearted partisanship which sometimes makes the scorer the best man on a side except the umpire : I allude to the Arrangements in Silver that leave the speed of the runners a negligible factor in the race. If you were at the esoteric corner of the field off Jones's Road, where athletic contests were held in Dublin, the signs of the times became so patent to you that it was almost superfluous to wait for the event. " Are ye goin' to lie down this round, Jem ? " one competitor would ask another. " Hould yer holt till I see what odds the bookies are givin' on Mick afther the first heat," would come the answer. And on the Turf, to those with inside information, betting at some of the minor race-courses was a gilt-edged investment. A quondam pupil of mine told me that a friend had urged him to put every penny he had on a previously unknown horse for the Farmer's Plate at a meeting which they both attended. He went to view the animal, but did not fall in love with its prospects ; just as the spirit of prophecy descends upon us in the cinema when we see the heroine write a quarto letter with three dainty flicks of her pen, and we know that we shall be privileged to behold it, anon, in faultless caligraphy on the screen—so, as my pupil gazed at the paddock, a

vision was vouchsafed to him of the poor weather-beaten brute foundering helplessly in the distance while the favourite romped home. Nevertheless his adviser insisted that it would win, and, despite his better judgment, he backed it. It ran true to form and finished well in the ruck; but while he was thinking over a few virile expressions he had learned at school, the numbers went up, "And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

He collected his gains, and, drawing his friend to a secluded spot behind the grand stand, said: "That horse never won."

"Of course it won," was the reply. "Hadn't the judge got his shirt on it?"

When the best horse does not win, there are usually sound reasons, and every Irishman believes he knows them all. He can see the Hidden Hand behind every movement, however apparently innocent, and he can tell you whether its colour is orange or green. "It's always warmest near the fire," he says, and he has no difficulty in deciding whether the A.O.H. or the Kildare Street Club lit that fire. He has little of the charity that thinketh no evil, but he thinks nothing the worse of those to whom he attributes the evil. He has the sense of fellowship that moved a notable publicist to condone the office-boy's thefts from the petty cash: "Remember, we all had to start in a small way . . ." An Irish business magnate addressing a committee began a sentence with the words: "When I'm honest . . ." and then checked himself, fearing he had been over-bold. "Of course, we're all in the same boat," he resumed

humbly, " and I'm not setting myself up to be better than the next ; but *when* I'm honest, I'm not afraid of anybody."

In the saddest, wisest, and most beautiful of Sir Anthony Hope's novels, ' The King's Mirror,' he describes the king's mentor, Hammerfeldt, in lines that might have been written about a very prevalent type of Irish character : " He had eaten of our salt and was our servant ; thus he would readily have died for us ; but he prayed pardon if we asked him to believe in us. ' Conduct,' he said once, ' is the outcome of selfishness limited by self-conceit.' It was his way so to put things as to strip them of friendly decent covering ; had he said self-interest limited by self-respect, the axiom would have been more accepted and less quoted. A superficial person used to exclaim to me, ' And yet he is so kind ! ' A man without ideals finds kindness the easiest thing in the world. In truth he was kind, and in a confidential sort of way that seemed to chuckle and wink, saying, ' We're rogues together ; then I must lend you a hand.' " In a man that holds himself aloof, this attitude might be called cynical ; but the Irishman warms to the attack, distributes his slanders with conviction, and finally subsides into a tolerant grin, as if the whole matter were too normal for excitement. Yet, since the most discreditable explanation is not invariably true, he sometimes errs. When I revisited Dublin I asked a former colleague for tidings of three fellow-workers, and it turned out that they had all received greater promotion than he had. " It's the same old story,"

he said sadly; "the Freemasons get everything." But as two of them happened to be staunch Roman Catholics, and the third published his sturdy Protestantism chiefly by never going to church on Sunday, the reason did not seem so convincing to me as it was comforting to its author. I did not, however, comment on it after the manner of a mordant official of the Post Office when he saw a group of clerks dining together and discussing, with some asperity, the recent promotion of a junior over their heads: "Ah! The Feast of the Passed-overs."

The religious motif we had always with us. Stuart, a Head Inspector of the Land Commission, who was a candidate for the Commissionership that fell vacant on the death of Michael Finucane, was a thoroughly competent man, esteemed by all who had dealings with him; but so far as the observances of religion went, I think he could say with Falstaff: "An I have not forgotten what the inside of a church is like, I am a peppercorn, a brewer's horse." There was only one other likely competitor, and when all the available wires had been pulled, and all the proper persons had been seen by the persons proper to see them, and the result was still unknown, Stuart whispered to a brother inspector that he believed he had a very good chance. The only thing he feared was that, Finucane being a Catholic, the Powers that Be might insist on a Catholic for his successor. This news the inspector repeated to the rest of us who were waiting for the latest tip from the course; and then—much in the mood of Lord

Melbourne's outbreak at the intrusion of religion into private life—he exclaimed with a manly indignation that well became him: "I think it's a damned shame to hold his religion against a man, when everybody knows he never practised it."

A widely travelled friend of mine, trying to make me realise the hardships of life in Melbourne after the great Bank smash of 1891, hit on the illuminating phrase: "I'll tell you how bad it was: you needed influence to get into jail." It conveyed the impression he wanted, since jail is almost the only place open to public competition where influence, and particularly clerical influence, is not usually deemed necessary in Ireland. An Irishman relishes the disposal of patronage as if it were punch. For any appointment, however lowly, that lay in the hands of elected authorities, the deciding factor was not the ability of the candidate but the importance of his backers. A young doctor looking for a dispensary at £40 per annum had to present himself before as many critical judges as an aspirant to the Academy of France: he had to besiege the Board of Guardians, conciliate the parish priest or rector, as the case might be, and bellow his family history to Justices of the Peace engaged in the solemn duty of planting turnips on the far side of ten-acre fields. "He who pleases many must have some species of merit," says Dr Johnson; and it often happened that men placed in good positions for bad reasons astounded their supporters by displaying powers that justified their selection. On the other hand, men have frequently been set aside through the excessive

zeal of their partisans which provoked a counter-attack, and the eventual choice of a harmless neutral to spite both factions. Between these extremes, I knew of a classic case where the strength of a man's interests, without raising the least odium against him, yet made his appointment impossible. He was the son of a Taxing Master at the Four Courts, and when the Land Commission was established he became a temporary clerk. His champions petitioned the Treasury to give him a permanent post, and My Lords, subdued by their number and rank, agreed to relax the rules and let him in, provided that he passed a qualifying examination in spelling and handwriting and simple arithmetic. But his arithmetical ideas were like the English auxiliary verbs, either irregular or defective or both, and in his spelling he was " too independent in his speculations to be orthodox in his conclusions " ; so that the very lenient examiner (who was described to me as " one of them ould-fashioned fellas that thinks dishonesty is dishonest ") could not unscrew his conscience from the sticking point ; and that was that. Again the loyal legions rallied round, again he got leave to be examined, and again he failed. Yet a third effort was made, but with the same result ; and then, feeling sure that the gods were against them, the weary helpers resigned from the struggle. Not long after, the office was changed from a temporary Commission to a permanent Department, and the Commissioners were allowed to stabilise the positions of any clerks whom they deemed fit ; and since everybody had at least one sturdy witness to his

worth, the Commissioners deemed them all fit except the recent candidate. They had no wish to discriminate against a faithful servant, but they detected a faint savour of inconsistency about asserting the talents of a man whom they had thrice decided to be incompetent. So he remained a temporary clerk until the day of his death, a martyr to the good intentions of his friends.

Normally, as we all know, the fairway to the green of a situation under the Crown is guarded by the Civil Service Commission, in whose cunning bunkers a myriad of hopes have been fatally dashed. I have been over their course, and obeyed all their instructions myself. I have left my hat and umbrella in the cloak-room provided for the purpose, written my examination number on the top right-hand corner of my answer book, selected eight out of the following twelve questions, gained the extra marks allotted for neatness and hand-writing, said what I knew about the Merovignian dynasty or the Corn Law League in not more than twenty lines, taken out my trial balance before passing the totals through the ledger, digested Returns into Summaries, and ruled forms as wide as my paper would permit. There may be Goths to whom these sacred mysteries mean nothing; but I swear that they are incomparable tests of a man's merit. My days, in retrospect, seem to have been devoted, metaphorically, to ruling forms as wide as my paper would permit; my little life has been rounded with a hank of red tape, and I may be thereby prejudiced in favour of competitive examinations. At the worst, the type they pro-

duced had a higher mental index than the politicians' nominees. But the staff of some Departments fluctuates too rapidly for the Civil Service Commission to intervene with success. Men have to be taken on for brief periods to meet sudden emergencies; and during the war, when clerks had to be found at the shortest notice in a limited and dwindling market, all regulations had to be brushed aside. From these causes I had to undertake the task of choosing potential officials out of a hungry mass of applicants. I did not believe I had any flair for the discovery of genius at sight, but as Clausewitz profoundly observes: "In war you must do the best you can," and I tackled the problem at first by the method of personal interview. Every aspirant brought with him testimonials to his efficiency that would have made Napoleon blush and Roosevelt simper diffidently; and I soon learned that these tributes might be disregarded without great injustice. The next mode of attack was a letter of introduction, usually more appealing and intimate, but not more significant, save in exceptional cases. I remember one, where the sealed enclosure told me: "You will find A. B. an excellent clerk if you have some one else to do the work." Another far-sighted candidate arrived with a recommendation from a Catholic Archbishop in the right-hand pocket of his coat and a recommendation from a Protestant Archbishop in the left. He relied on his native intuition to determine which of the pastoral epistles he would present first.

It was customary for the writers of such letters

to say that he hoped his protégé's qualifications would be carefully considered before any appointment was made, and I have often wondered whether the ironic touch was intentional, so obvious was it that the man's chance of obtaining the job depended almost entirely on his qualifications not being considered at all. To prevent confusion in these delicate matters, an Irish politician, now of some eminence, arranged a diplomatic code with satellites on whose discretion he could rely. If he were handed a letter from any of these headed "My dear Paddy" and filled with gushing references to schoolboy days, he was to understand that the bearer had no particular merits beyond being hard to get rid of; but if it were curt and formal, and began "Dear Sir," it meant that the office-seeker was well worth his attention.

During my apprenticeship to the trade I took notes, thus: "A. B., loud, well brushed and confident. Three years with Messrs Brown & Jones as bookkeeper. Something happened with the books, and he left. Smells of drink." But when I discovered that the last sentence covered a class rather than an individual, I took the fact for granted, unless otherwise stated. This, you must remember, was during the war, when any decent man, over-age or medically unfit for active service, was snatched up by employers the moment he appeared, and our choice was confined to little better than the dregs of the population.

My experience of this work not only made me distrust my own quickness to discern ability and character during a five-minute talk, but left me

sceptical about my colleagues' powers also. They usually based their claims to insight on the fact that they had seen a large number of people, " and after a while you feel a sort of confidence in your instinct—if you know what I mean." As if a new sense could be born of vain repetition, or a change from diffidence to conceit must imply a growth in skill. It seemed to me that we needed grounds more relative than those for picking a staff. Besides, interviews wasted time—although a rough-and-ready Irish Judge managed to compress one into rather less than quarter of a minute. It was a hot summer day, and he was enjoying the luxury of shirt-sleeves after the heat and dignity of his robes when a caller was announced. " Show him in," said the Judge. The visitor was dressed in the over-perfection of taste, with an exquisite white slip edging his waistcoat, his trousers creased to an exact symmetry, each particular hair on his head oiled and smoothed back to its appointed furrow, and his glittering boots topped by a pair of spats as stainless as a Sheffield razor ; and as he sailed across the threshold with his silk hat held at absolutely the correct angle, he looked indeed a thing of life. The Judge's eyes bulged and his hands tightened convulsively on the sides of his chair. " Show him out ! " he gasped ; and the rest was silence.

I heard also a case in the commercial world where the interview approximated more towards a solo than a duet. After much pestering by letter and through third parties, a young careerist pushed his way into the presence of the heads of

a large business. He did not belong to the type that overlooks its own merits, and immediately he entered the room he opened the subject of himself and his capabilities, on which he had much ease of discourse. He was the Man Who Knew. He had signed the coupon in the place marked X; and if the firm had enough elementary intelligence to offer him an adequate salary before he was snapped up by competitors, their enterprise would be reflected in their future profits. The partners listened until he had finished. Then the senior member unclasped his lantern jaws: "Well, Mr Jones, we have seen you. We are not impressed. Good-morning." And, like the startled cowboy upon whom the Bishop had bestowed an episcopal benediction, Jones "didn't know the repartee to *that*."

The face-to-face method of the law courts has undeniable advantages when facts have to be elicited from a hostile witness; but here again Irish ingenuity has found another way of climbing into the sheepfold. There was a Dublin doctor, now deceased, who made a small but lucrative speciality out of the subconscious training of claimants for damages after railway and tram accidents. "I'm afraid ye've been very badly hurt, me poor fellow," he would say to the convalescent as soon as he was fit for rehearsal. "I doubt if ye could stand up straight with your eyes shut. . . . But let's see ye have a try at it. . . . There, I knew ye couldn't. . . . And ye couldn't lift your arm higher than that, could ye? . . . No? . . . Me poor fellow, it's a pity of ye. . . .

And doesn't it hurt ye like blazes when ye stoop over? . . . I thought so. . . . And haven't ye pains along here? . . . and here? . . . Of course ye have. . . . And haven't ye got terrible thin? . . . Aren't ye nearly slippin' through your trousers? . . . Doesn't your coat flap about ye as if ye were a scarecrow?" If, after a few days of this treatment, the victim could not guess what he ought to say when he was pronounced well enough to meet the company's representative, he must be a muddy-mettled rascal, unpregnant of his cause; and in that event he could only order a suit of clothes a couple of sizes too large for him, and just hope for the best at the trial. To British critics such a practitioner might seem deficient in some of the traditions of his high calling; but Dubliners, for the reasons already explained, heard and retailed these stories with unheavenly tolerance, and merely remarked: "If there wasn't that sort, there wouldn't be all sorts."

Another advantage of having the deponent on the spot emerged from an episode at an Irish Employment Exchange. A girl typist happened to pass by while a woman 'on the dole' was telling the pay-clerk how impossible it was to obtain honest work—though God knew she had almost gone down on her bended knees to get anything that would save her from the disgrace of 'the burroo' (Anglice, the bureau—*i.e.*, the Employment Exchange). The typist paused and sniffed suspiciously. She sniffed again like a connoisseur identifying the bouquet of a favourite vintage, and then she drew the pay-clerk aside.

" Can't you smell that ? " she whispered. " Don't you know what it is ? It's fish and chips ; and she didn't pick up all that by just dropping in for a meal. . . . She's got a job at a fried fish shop."

These opportunities were rare, even if I had the detective instinct to seize them, so I fell back upon the written examination, which had, at least, the merit of impartiality. It served its purpose of sifting out the probables from the impossibles ; and if the best answers provided us with clerks, the worst provided us with amusement. I hope we did not laugh in an unkindly fashion ; for when men have spent their adult lives doing remarkable things with a soldering iron or a saw, it is not to be wondered at if they think (as some did) that Oliver Goldsmith was ' a character in Dickens,' or that ' Paradise Lost ' was written by Milton Hayes. On the contrary, I believe we all sympathised with the struggling many whose chance of a few weeks' pay depended on their success, but whose education had closed half-way through a National School. As one of them wrote, pathetically but irrelevantly, at the end of his paper : " I am absolutely ashamed at not getting full marks at this examination. It is easy, yet it is too difficult for me." But the very fact that the candidates were competing for a living proved that the answers were ingenuous, and not, as otherwise we might have thought, put down out of untimely pleasantry or sarcasm. The conundrums we propounded were faced in the gallant spirit of Sir Thomas Browne : " What song the sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women,

though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture." When knowledge failed, imagination could, and did, "hazard a wide solution." Candidates were asked to supply the missing word in the sentence: "A —— line is the shortest distance between two points," and the following adjectives were offered as suitable: centre, short, curved, given, diagonal, imaginary, parallel, horizontal; but there was a hint of bitter experience about the suggestion 'clothes.'

A number of women were asked to correct the sentence, "The quickest of the two girls seen him first," and one penetrated through the accident of form to the very root of the matter with the answer, "The smartest of the two girls seen him home."

Only Irish brains could discover that "Summer Time" was "brought into force to give us more daylight at night," or that "Local Option" was "the desire of people in a locality to have drink whether they wanted it or not." But three answers from different pens seemed to me to display traces of positive genius; and I here bequeath them to the impartial judgment of future ages:—

1. Bank Rate is the money charged by banks for keeping money from the public.

2. Vivisection is the dissection of criminals for the purpose of promotion in the medical profession.

3. The League of Nations is representatives of all nations who meet every year at Geneva to make war inevitable.

CHAPTER V.

ECONOMICS AND ETIQUETTE.

"When a rich man speaketh, every man holdeth his tongue, and look, what he sayeth, they extol it to the clouds. But if the poor man speak, they say: 'What fellow is this?' And if he stumbleth, they will help to overthrow him."—*Ecclesiasticus.*

"It is the first £10,000 that counts."—Lord Beaverbrook.

Late one evening in my former home the maid-of-all-work came to me with a familiar message: "There's a gintleman below wants to see ye." I went down with but small anticipations of pleasure; for experience showed that the formula was usually the prelude to an attempt to interest me in a new patent razor, an encyclopædia with a revolving bookcase, the necessity of life insurance, a national calamity to be averted only by returning some notorious saviour of our country to the Corporation, or (commonest of all) an invitation—"speaking as man to man"—to lend half a crown till the end of the month. I was mistaken. A glance at my visitor convinced me that he was neither a sleek canvasser nor a glib borrower: if he were in politics, he must be at least a Cabinet Minister;

if in finance, he would surely juggle with millions. He was of imposing presence and resonant speech, and he radiated personality like an American executive trained by the best correspondence systems.

"You know *me*," he announced, when I asked timidly what I could do for him.

I had to plead ignorance, feeling that it was no excuse.

"Think!" he commanded sternly; but my scared wits gave me no help, and I could only shake my head.

He saw that I was rather to be pitied than upbraided, and he made a concession to my impotence. "I know every medical man on the list in Dublin," said he, not proudly or contentiously, but as one stating an axiom. "I'm the manager of Claffey's pawnshop."

Light now dawned upon me; for though I had not previously met him face to face (my custom, such as it was, lying with a rival establishment), his fame had reached the obscurest ears. A chum of mine had gone to him with the laudable intention of tiding over a crisis by pawning a copy of Quain's 'Anatomy,' and had been greeted from behind the counter with: "What the hell are the likes of yous doin' in here? Why don't you lave off drinkin' like blazes and study your books, and you wouldn't have to be landin' them out to me? . . . Five shillin's!"

The memory served as an introduction, and it soon transpired that he had mistaken me for a namesake living further up the street, whereupon

we parted with mutual esteem. I had no reason to doubt his word regarding the scope of his social knowledge, for few Dublin students, medical or other, got through their course without calling at some time upon the descendants of the Lombards. There was no shame felt about the transaction. As we said of ourselves, we were poor but pleasant. "You can live on almost nothing in New Zealand," I was told by a traveller who had spent several years there. This was an attraction of the colony that I had previously overlooked, but when I tried to explore the fascinating subject, my curiosity was damped by the exordium: "You see, to begin with, you *have* nothing. . . ." Looked at from that point of view, poverty can be reckoned as one of the natural resources of Ireland also. Before the war a bachelor in Dublin was rich on £500 a year, a married man comfortably off on £600 or £700. Young Civil Servants entitled to an annual salary of £70 or conceivably £80 while they were still infants in the eyes of the Law, were envied as spoiled pets of Fortune, and domestic servants saved a wedding dowry out of fifteen shillings or a pound a month. At one end of the scale people were grossly opulent if they pouched every year a thousand of the real golden sovereigns that were then known to exist and be actually current in privileged circles; at the other, our brothers and sisters before God huddled together in dreadful tenements and clothed themselves with rags that had long lost any resemblance to a garment, but contrived in some surprising way to procure food and occasional drink out of no annual

income at all. Neither party cavilled at an arrangement so plainly in accordance with what Mr Jeff Peters calls "the ultimatum designs of Providence"—though macabre stories were rife of the devices used by the submerged to eke out their scanty diet. "Ah me fut to the hospitals," said an itinerant fishwife to one of her patrons. "They're scrimpin' and savin' for to pay for the new nurses' uniforms; that's what they're doin', bad 'cess to them. In the oul' days they'd give ye a pot of ointment that'd last ye a fortnight—an' now the childer has to ate dthry bread three days a week. . . . Take the baby out of the pram, Mary Ellen, an' let the lady look at the fish!"

Were we, therefore, a nation of failures? Throgmorton Street or Park Lane would say unhesitatingly that we were. "The man of thirty-five who is making less than £500 a year is a failure," was how it was put to me, who was making a good deal less, by a stockbroker who was making a good deal more. He eventually steered his affairs into the safe haven of the Bankruptcy Court and may have revised his opinion, which shocked my finer feelings when I heard it—that being a time when I was proud of having feelings fine enough to be shocked by it. My studies had lain much amongst the moralists of the music-hall, and I wanted to tell him, in a voice suffused with ethical condemnation, that money cannot command love or friendship or bestow happiness. I am glad now that I refrained from a fatuous irrelevancy which he knew as well as I did; for whether or not you agree with his precise figure, that, or something

like it, is the simple rule the world needs for its decisions. "Attorneys are for the world and the world is for attorneys," as Walter Bagehot says; or, if you prefer Bernard Shaw's statement, "A sufficient income is indispensable to the practice of virtue." It is not contended that the survival of the fittest in the money market is any proof of moral worth. On the contrary, the evolutionary test makes failure normal, and therefore not discreditable. Nature's methods are wholesale; her selection is through death. She breeds and slays by myriads, exterminating blindly in search of the product she wants, and "out of the residue createth she a god." The fittest graduates of her savage school are the cleverest shirkers, the slowest 'over the top,' the first to leave the sinking ship. If survival be the proof of merit, then I, who remain gloriously at home beside my fire, am the brilliant success; and brave sweet-natured A. B., buried by a shell beneath his own dug-out in Flanders, and gallant kindly C. D., whom a thin layer of sand constrains for ever in Gallipoli, are the failures. It is not so.

Yet within its limits the cash standard works well enough: it is simple and indisputable. Secretly I may believe that I could have swayed the rod of Empire at a suitable opportunity, or waked to ecstasy the living lyre after a very little preliminary practice; but without definite evidence I might find it hard to prove my case, even to those best affected towards me. Sometimes, after listening to Sarasate or Kubelik or Kreisler, I have gone home and taken down my fiddle and tried

to reproduce their perfect double-stopping or faultless harmonics, " while the tone is still in my ear," as I inform my agitated family. However defective my execution may be, it serves its purpose, and for the moment, to myself, I am a success : I hear anew the melodies as they streamed from the master's bow. That this is not what my next-door neighbour hears, I deduce from the impassioned haste with which he closes his windows ; and while I may sneer at the implied criticism of my musical prowess, the disquieting element of doubt remains. On the other hand, the fact that I am not a capitalist is so obvious to everybody that it hardly inflicts a wound. I have much to set on the credit side of the account : I have made staunch friends, I have run light in the spring, I have loved and laughed and sat at good men's tables. So, in Dublin, there was no need to live above your income to keep up a dignity that no one respected. " Decent men don't get on in the world," we assured one another, explaining away our defeat at the hands of Fate. Like a wise general, we surrendered an untenable fortress to preserve inviolate the citadel of our self-confidence. And cheerfulness was always breaking in : we discovered unsuspected possibilities in the lasting powers of white shirts and the health derived from walking to our places of business. Some of us revealed a positive genius for impecuniosity. I remember a Civil Servant whose hurried exit by one door usually anticipated the arrival of a dun by another, and who never seemed to sleep twice in succession under the same roof : if he approached

his office in the morning from the south, he left it at night heading west. On the day of his marriage he made a spirited attempt to borrow five shillings from his best man to pay for the cab ; and orthodox opinion held that, considering the special circumstances, he ought to have succeeded.

In a cognate department to mine a temporary clerk started an agitation amongst his class to be made permanent, and appointed himself treasurer of the movement. The appeal for funds met with such liberal response that he remained continuously drunk for five days, and would probably have established a record had not a second Napoleon of Finance arisen who threatened to smash his face unless he made an equal division of the spoils. The junior staff of another Irish office adopted the communism of ' Stalky & Co.' Small articles like umbrellas and fountain pens found lying about were transferred to the safer care of the pawnbroker, but the ticket was brought back punctiliously to the owner. This custom inculcated a useful habit of tidiness, such as Sir Robert Hart learned from a Chinese servant subsequently employed by a man I knew. " How did Sir Robert manage to keep his cigars ? " asked my acquaintance, whose own were vanishing with inexplicable speed. " He lockee them up," said John.

Civil servants of less pith and moment took up side lines : journalism, accountancy, teaching, deputising for performers in the city orchestras, or growing tomatoes for pleasure and profit. I was surprised and gratified one Christmas by the receipt of a card with friendly greetings from a

senior bureaucrat with whom my intercourse was only nominal. I concluded that my personal charm had fascinated him more than I had imagined; but while I was still glowing from the subtle flattery I read a printed line nestling under a tasteful spray of holly in the corner: "Thermopylæ and other poems. At all booksellers. 5s. net." And I felt the ulterior motive like a conviction of sin.

The long approach was not always so easy to detect. A provincial bank manager, who allowed me to be familiar with him because I kept my overdraft elsewhere, was asked by a young countryman to advance £200 on note of hand without private inquiry or other irritating formalities. He replied gently that banks were not so philanthropic as newspaper advertisers: if a potential client had security to offer, the loan would be granted, but otherwise indubitably not.

"Gimme the money an' I'll put it straight back on deposit wid ye," said the youth.

"What's the good of borrowing money at six per cent to lend it at two-and-a-half?" countered the manager.

"That's me own affair," retorted the youth. "Will ye do it, an' I'll tell ye the why-for afther?"

The deal was concluded on those terms, and a month later the client returned to surrender his receipt and adjust the difference in interest. "Now, Jimmie," said the manager, "what was the game?"

"I was coortin' Bridie Slevin," elucidated Jimmie, "and her Da said if I could show him two hunder' pounds, he'd give me the girrl an'

two hunder' with her; so I showed him your resate. Bridie an' me was married yestherday."

As Dubliners had not enough money to support insolence, no one was insolent about money. Snobbery was rife, but it was the snobbery of caste. Nonentities patronised their friends, condescended to their neighbours, and scorned their fellow-citizens at large from the heights of a self-created gentility; the superiority complex was most evident where it had the least basis in merit. From almost everybody who enjoyed the Lord Mayor's hospitality at the Mansion House you got the same disparaging comment: "The comp'ny's very mixed." There was none so lowly that he had not some one to look down upon. "Them's the quarest things I've seen so far, to-night," said a footman in plush and velvet, indicating two of the local guests at a reception given to officers of the Channel Fleet. "What'll Lord Char-les an' the quality think of us at all, at all?" I do not know exactly what impression Lord Charles Beresford took away with him, but his comrades in arms were understood to have enjoyed themselves, and the ladies present felt that they had not entirely wasted their powder and shot silk. A Lieutenant-Commander who had been attending one of Eblana's fair daughters asked her what refreshment she would fancy. "Thank ye, Captain," she murmured coyly, "if it's aisy come by, I'd be glad of a pint of porther and a taert." Another debutante helped herself copiously to ice pudding; then, dropping her spoon with an expression of anguish, she pressed her hand con-

vulsively to her jaw and exclaimed: "Och, howly Jazes, me rotten tooth." These stories, and hundreds like them, were retailed by people who despised the frequenters of the Mansion House for the sufficient reason that nobody who wanted to go there had much difficulty about getting a card of invitation. But what I am glad to remember is the wife of a rich Alderman making her stately entrance in shimmering brocade, her snowy neck and shoulders set off with a rope of pearls, and a tiara glittering in her dark hair. Her eyes fell upon the humble attendant behind the cloak-room counter, and straightway her honest face changed from regal dignity to kindly recognition. "Arrah Jem, is that yerself?" she exclaimed, rushing across to him with outstretched welcoming hand. "Sure I haven't seen ye for ages. . . . How's the man?" Whether she is still in the flesh or out of it I know not; but wherever she is, may good luck go with her for a true warm-hearted woman.

Our particular form of family pride was a stumbling block to the stranger in our midst. A Scotch lady told me that she did not know an Irish family that hadn't come down in the world. According to her, if you went into a workman's home in Glasgow, you saw over the mantelpiece a framed photograph of the grandfather, who was an 'orra man' on a farm, and you would be shown a cabinet made by the father, who had become a journeyman carpenter: the family history was all upwards. They boasted cannily about the way they had got on in the world and

made the best of themselves. But if you went into a Dublin cottage and looked at the furniture, bought on the instalment system and not paid for, the head of the household began to apologise for it. " Sure it isn't what we've been accustomed to at all. . . . Me mother—God rest her sowl—was wan of the O'Rourkes before she was married," and then he would gape at you to see you stricken dumb by the news.

I have noticed similar incidents when Irish-Americans of the second generation visit the old homestead. If nephew Andy from the Bowery arrives (as in character he ought to do) with his pockets full of dollars and his mouth full of gold stoppings, he gets a real Irish welcome and plenty of whisky, and goes to bed singing " A Nation Once Again " as well as he can for hiccups. He encounters his first set-back next day when he hears that his cousin is out of a job and the auspices are favourable for a continuance of that condition. It appears that trade is at a standstill: it has been at a standstill for years. There is no money in the country, good or bad. After breakfast Andy goes down the road with a cigar between his teeth, meditating on the beauties of the Democratic ticket, and comes across a farmer at work in his field. The farmer is also pessimistic, but his trouble is want of labour. " I can't find help anywhere," he grumbles. " It's a great hindrance to me." Here is an opening for the fine art of salesmanship. Andy has won the accolade of ' a go-getter,' and after a little haggling he sells Mike's services to the farmer for an agreed sum. But

when he returns to his uncle's house he discovers that Mike has no intention of being sold. "I know the pay is small," Andy expostulates, "but it'll give you a start." And then Mike "throws a look at him that'd gap a hatchet," as he describes it subsequently to his cronies. "Is it ask yer uncle's son for to worrk for the likes of oul' O'Toole? 'Tis ashamed of ye I am, Andy! Why, his father used to be herd for our gran'father before he done Jem Rafferty out of his bit of a farm. . . ."

"Well, he seems to have got the goods, anyhow," protests Andy.

"An' why wouldn't he? Sure the devil always looks afther his own. . . . Him an' his dthirty money! . . . I'd be long sorry to touch it!"

Andy, who has lived in the atmosphere of competition from his cradle, can find no common ground with people to whom 'getting on' means comparatively nothing; so if you meet him inhaling the summer breezes from the 'bus exhausts in Piccadilly, he will regretfully confide to you: "The Celtic cha'acter is vurry cha'ming, but it's got to go—it's sure got to go."

The only time Dublin felt inclined to respect wealth was when it was spent royally. Lord Dudley, who scattered money with profusion, was the Lord-Lieutenant that behaved, in Dublin opinion, as the representative of majesty ought to behave. Mr Walter Long, who also had the merit of splendid giving, likewise won and deserved the title of 'a rare gintleman' in the difficult post of Chief Secretary. But they must have made things hard for their successors, whose means may not have

been adequate to such liberality. The Aberdeens, in particular, suffered for what may have been due as much to inability as parsimony. Nevertheless we did not fail altogether to discriminate between avarice and frugality. "He's a dacint man when he has it, but thin, like that again, he never has it," was an idiom which recognised the difference between those who could not and those who would not spend; but Dublin did not think it proper for Viceroys to be in either class. They received £20,000 per annum during their tenure of office, and to do the thing handsomely, according to Irish lights, they needed about £40,000.

North-east Ulster does not foster these grandiose notions. The natives of that district have a Scotch strain in their blood, and want value for their money; but, just as may be seen amongst their kinsfolk, their thrift does not preclude hospitality and generosity. Indeed, so far as my experience goes, the Scotch are a much maligned race in this matter. I knew a sturdy Westmoreland yeoman, the richest man of his district, compared with whom the proverbial Aberdonian was open-handed to the verge of prodigality. His little daughter was found by the School Medical Inspector to be very short-sighted. At a subsequent examination, when her eyes were noticed to be worse than ever, her teacher explained that efforts had been made to persuade the parent to buy suitable glasses, but he refused. "We can't let the child grow blind through her father's fault," said the Inspector. "I'll get the such-and-such Society to supply spectacles free of charge." In due course the father

was invited to bring the girl to the nearest town, where she would have them fitted free of charge. He drove her to the optician, and a week later he sent the Society a bill for half a day's hire of his own horse and cart.

Dublin would have boycotted that man rigorously. Our pride—if you like, our absurd pride—saved us from avarice ; and our tolerance for minor errors of judgment, such as dipsomania or theft or homicide, stopped at flagrant stinginess. To lack money was the common lot of humanity, a loan was the obvious way of escape, and the rights of the borrower had to be preserved. He sought them by all the known routes. Some tried to pave the way with a well-turned phrase : " Physically, I'm a pocket Hercules ; intellectually, I'm a second Newton ; but financially, I'm broke," was a gambit I recall as having opened a winning position. The hard-luck story, coupled with definite assurances of repayment in stated sums at fixed dates, was probably the most told and least believed. I have heard of a clergyman who announced that the collection in aid of the Church Fund included an anonymous cheque ; I have never received a mercantile instrument of exactly that kind, but now and again I have had an I O.U. thrust upon me that would have been as valuable without a signature as with one. Then there were the breezy borrowers, who, as Mr Wodehouse says, " make their touch with such briskness that it practically amounts to a hold-up." What parent could resist a loving daughter's appeal framed in the words : " Daddy, you're not a bad-looking man

for your time of life . . . gimme five shillings"? But the direct method was too crude for the taste of the more astute financiers. I have especially before my mind a man whose excellent qualities were overshadowed by an incurable habit of preferring other people's property to his own. "You must admit he's a very good-tempered fellow," I said to one of his detractors. "Yes, he'll put up with a lot—when he wants the loan of a plane," was all the satisfaction I got; and now that I think of it, I seem to remember an extra suavity that fell about him like a benediction when he wished to borrow something. It was certainly a strategic treat to watch the way he moulded the talk to his purpose. He was much too wary to frighten what American advertisers call "the prospect" by showing his hand at the beginning of the game. He would start afar off and sweep tortuously towards the point, until a chance remark or an appropriate anecdote ostensibly recalled it to his memory. He might even leave it until the moment of departure; often, when he was actually at the door, he would be seized with the necessity of recollection, like a man suddenly confronted by the phantom of an unposted letter: "Oh . . . by the way . . . if you're not using your dress suit on Monday . . ." And that was my cue to prove myself a perfect gentleman by going in search of the desired garment.

From this distance of time it is rather a mystery to me how, at my then age, I came to own such an article at all: since outside a limited circle the Dublin of my youth kept its 'other' suit for

Sundays, and dressed finally for the waking hours, at eight o'clock in the morning. A cousin of mine once avowed to me that his dream of worldly happiness was to live in a hotel and dress for dinner every blessed evening (only he used a different adjective). But he died, poor fellow, with his harmless ambition unfulfilled. When need arose for a dress suit, the customary procedure was to borrow or hire one ; but I heard of ingenious persons who hit upon a third device. They ordered a ready-made suit on approval, removed the labels that marked its legitimate ownership, and wore it not more than two consecutive evenings before replacing the labels, pressing out the creases with a hot iron, and returning it to the shop as unfit for active service. Apart from ethical objections, I understand that this method did not conduce to peace of mind or enjoyment of the entertainment in progress : a splash of soup or the upsetting of a wine glass, and the world was never the same again.

You may wonder why beings, presumably human, should take so much trouble and risk for so small an end, but you must remember that a dress suit had a sanctity beyond all other clothes : it was the badge of emancipation, the passport to man's estate. Much liberty was claimed and conceded about morning dress ; you might wear a frock-coat with brown boots and a straw hat, and the ensemble would be considered on its merits without any tyrannical prejudice in favour of custom. The late Sheehy Skeffington, a Don Quixote in this as in other causes, was, I believe,

the first man in the British islands to sport 'plus fours'; he had tamed Dublin to the sight of them long before they dawned on Oxford. Mr James Stephens, our gifted poet, took his walks abroad in a sombrero and cloak evidently designed for Spanish brigands muttering 'carrambas'; Lord Ashbourne displayed himself in the ancient Irish kilt; and more eccentric people appeared in more eccentric costumes still, without arousing any sensation other than that such was their good pleasure. But a dress suit was one of the attributes of a gentleman, even more essential than the austerity and aloofness of demeanour adopted by some to separate themselves from the vulgar herd. ("That Misther Bell ye have here is a very nice gintleman," said a new messenger at the Royal University to the head porter. "He is, indade," agreed the porter, for whose comfort in his declining years Bell had taken much care. "He's so nice that ye'd hardly know he was a gintleman at all.") An English panel doctor, whose surgery was on the ground floor of a block of artisans' dwellings, informed me that if he were called to a patient at night, he might go in his pyjamas without giving offence, but it was an unforgivable sin to forget his tall hat. Similarly in Dublin you could flout sartorial tradition as insolently as you wished, but you must not attend a public dinner in tweeds. A Civil Servant I knew, an engineer by profession, was summoned to the annual dinner of his fraternity at the dead waste and middle of the month, when purses yawn and finances give up the ghost. He was dowered by Nature with one of those pear-

shaped torsos for which clothes have to be made strictly to measure, so that of necessity he had bought the obligatory dress suit; but if he pawned that, to raise the wherewithal for the ticket and the wine, he could not sit presentably at meat with his peers. He was, however, a fellow of excellent contrivance, ready for any emergency. He pledged the suit with his usual pawnbroker for forty shillings, and hired it out again for the evening for fifteen, thus leaving an available balance of one pound five—wealth ample not only for the immediate need, but to carry him in splendour to the end of the month.

Although I must have suffered many hardships to secure my own dress suit, I cannot now deny that it proved a disappointment. In a morning jacket I was awkward, diffident, shy; I was apologetic to footmen and abject before butlers; the conversation of a drawing-room left me timidly inarticulate. Kind people used to load me with embarrassment by encouraging me publicly to say something; and then I would let drop an incredibly banal remark into the midst of an overpowering silence, and want immediately to rush home and rub my head in the hearthrug. I expected the dress suit to make me confident and audible; I hoped that the liveried statue behind my chair would lose all his power to distress and intimidate me; I looked forward to saying brilliant courtly things to exquisite women under pink lamp-shades, and trusted I should remember them at the critical moment. But my sombre costume was too much in the foreground of my thoughts for me ever to

feel at ease with it. Men who are born to dress suits wear them unconsciously ; waiters and villains in melodrama, who adopt them as a matter of business, practise the technique secretly by night until they have sufficient skill to pass muster with their fellows ; more is not required of them. But even that amount of facility was denied to me. The Puritanic bias I inherited from generations of homespun ancestors afflicted me with a shrinking sense of immodesty whenever I caught sight of my expanse of shirt front, and realised how hopelessly my waistcoat was in a minority on a division. My tails haunted me like a passion ; they entangled themselves with every possible object near me ; they spread destruction abroad in ballrooms, and covered me with confusion in theatres.

On the whole, I had most enjoyment out of my suit vicariously. It was much in request for dances, it was received with applause on the concert platform, and I have even watched it doing me credit on the stage. Eventually, when the coat frayed at the wrist and gaped at the seams, and, as Dick Phenyl says, " the trousers had been attending funerals for years," I began to look upon a request for a loan of the battered veteran as a compliment too fulsome to be quite acceptable. I could not bring myself to destroy it or give it away ; and I committed it to its cardboard sepulchre, where it slipped undisturbed into dust and oblivion like a stout ship that has ridden out many a storm with her head to the wind and sinks down quietly at anchor in the harbour at last.

CHAPTER VI.

DRINK TAKEN.

"The virile virtues of the pothouse."—G. K. Chesterton.

"He put himself on a strict diet of whiskey and soda."—Frank Richardson.

During a performance of 'Elijah' the pause after the chorus, "Thanks be to God: He laveth the thirsty land," was broken by a profane Irish fiddler, who muttered: "If I were in a thirsty land, I'd dam soon lave it." And so did Dubliners. Every Sunday morning a goodly, if not godly, crowd trekked to the suburbs to become 'boneyfide travellers,' entitled to as much liquor as they could consume and pay for. The 'Open Sesame' to any public-house outside the city boundary was, "Show your thramticket!" If you could do that, neither the guardian of the door nor the constable posted opposite would dream of refusing you admittance, though both might know you lived round the next corner. Then interfering reformers at Westminster raised the legal limit to some preposterous distance—ten or twelve miles, I forget which—and thereby drove all who could

afford it to the Great Beyond, where their status would be restored once more. At first sight it might appear that what the tramways lost the railways gained, but it was not so. Many poor souls who could pay for either their train or their drinks but not for both, had to endure the pangs of abstinence until opening time in town. But the lucky remnant that escaped to Howth or Bray or Lucan or Malahide were welcomed with the same old-world hospitality they had left reluctantly behind; nor to any one with money in his pockets was it stinted upon the nice definition of a word. For example—

One Sunday in July a friend of mine went to Bray, ostensibly to climb the Sugar Loaf Mountain. The walk was long, the weather was sultry, he was fat and bald, and, like Bill Nye's, his was "a nature that did not need much awe-inspiring grandeur, but a good deal of woven-wire mattress and light nutritious food." Consequently, when he reached the summit and surveyed hills, woodlands, and "bowery hollows crowned with summer sea," his first thought was, "What a pity the Providence that created this noble expanse did not think fit to punctuate it with a single pub." His dry lips and streaming brow urged him on his homeward route through heather and bracken to the village of Enniskerry, where he expected an even more beautiful prospect—a renewal of his acquaintance with that poor creature, small beer. He plunged into a hostelry and ordered a bottle of Guinness to begin with; but while it was being opened, a hideous suspicion burgeoned in his mind: had he

re-entered the ten (or was it twelve?) mile limit, and, if so, had he forfeited his hard-earned rights? He put the question to the company, who discussed it earnestly while he hastily emptied his glass and signed to have it replenished—just to be on the safe side if the verdict went against him. But the proprietor, impatient of mere academic subtleties or intolerant of the modern spirit of morbid scepticism, closured the debate with, "What the blazes does it matther? Sure, I've only a six-day licence anyway."

On week-days, of course, there was no necessity to go far afield for drink. Dublin abounded in facilities for mitigating sobriety: at the moment I cannot recollect a street with more than two shops one of which did not sell liquor. There may have been thoroughfares so indecently conspicuous, but there cannot have been many. On the contrary, the establishments of the more illustrious publicans were used by the natives as guide-posts to wanted addresses. "It's just beyond Sane's—or Dunphy's—corner," or, "It's the first turn afther Mooney's—or Tallon's," or, "It's right opposite 'The Arch'—or 'The Oval'—or 'The Ship'; sure ye can't miss it," was the popular formula not less illuminating than the mathematical "Second right, fifth left" with which the London policeman puts you on the way you should go.

The name of a tavern just mentioned gives me, incidentally, a flash-light memory of a local worthy who was known as 'The Skipper,' because he was always the last to leave 'The Ship.' He could swallow at least four more glasses of gin during

the lunch hour than any other servant of the Post Office, and was greatly respected in consequence. Once he came back to duty so thoroughly steeped in the spirit of the time that his colleagues locked him up in a small storeroom to sleep off his debauch. Owing to pressure of work his presence was unfortunately forgotten, and he did not awake until all had gone home. Then the stillness, the bare tiny room, and the ring of the housekeeper's heels in the corridor outside suggested to his dazed brain a not unfamiliar environment; and he shouted through the key-hole, "Sergeant, for the love o' God put the spout to me lips an' gimme a dhrink of wather"—that being the way the long-nosed cans in Store Street Police Station were used for the refreshment of prisoners.

Although publicans in Dublin clustered as thick as autumn leaves in Vallombrosa or flies over army stew in Flanders, most of them contrived to flourish. Gossip about any middle-class family of means and unknown origin was sure to end with, "The gran'father kept a pub."—no other source of income, except possibly pawnbroking, being considered. The support of 'The Trade' was essential to any large movement, whether religious, social, or charitable; and it was strongly, if not well, represented on the Corporation. Nevertheless (such is the tyranny of democratic government, alien or autonomous) licensed premises had to close down at eleven o'clock. Thereafter, the place of the modern night club was supplied by the shebeens that profiteered inferior whisky and porter to belated revellers in the more disreputable

quarters. With the increasing vogue of temperance, and the rising price of intoxicants, these sanatoria languished until the post-war troubles and the introduction of curfew revived them to fill, once again, a long-felt want. Their Indian summer came during the years when the Republicans were refusing to recognise the authority of Great Britain, just as they subsequently refused to recognise the authority of the Free State—without result in either case, beyond the moral satisfaction of making a dramatic gesture. At this epoch, the proprietress of a shebeen suspected of harbouring gunmen was haled before a military tribunal. The presiding officer asked her politely if she recognised the court; and after a glance at the soldiers confronting her, she answered frankly: "Ivery blessed wan of them except yerself, yer Honour!"

Dublin being so adequately equipped for the study of the Drink Question in all its branches, it is not surprising that a great many citizens undertook the entire curriculum. Forty years ago, an Irishman returning from New Zealand was invited by his colonial coterie to report how his birthplace struck him after his long absence, and he sent them a postcard reading thus: "Dublin. First impressions. Priests and Policemen. Teams of rain. Everybody always drunk." I think the beauty of the phrase must have allured him into a little picturesque exaggeration, for even then teetotallers were at large in the city, although they were not exactly encouraged. "Come along now and have one," said the owner of a large

bill-posting business to a new clerk on his first morning in the office. The clerk pleaded that he had signed the pledge. "If ye don't take your whack, ye can get to blazes out of this," roared his employer, aghast at the foul revelation. "I won't have any man in my place that thries to take advantage of me by keepin' sober like a measly informer." Nearly everybody drank, and a large number drank too much. A Vicar Choral of Christ Church Cathedral told me that when he was a choir boy he had seen a clergyman support himself, while reading the lessons, by the outstretched wings of the eagle lectern; and had heard him afterwards inform the organist, "If it wasn't for the bloody duck, I'd have been all over the floor." The same reverend gentleman, walking down Harcourt Street, took his handkerchief from his tail pocket and dragged with it a pint bottle of brandy, which crashed upon the pavement. He turned to view the disaster, and caught sight of one of his parishioners close behind him; upon which he shifted his gaze instantly to an open window at the top of the adjacent house and exclaimed, "Wasn't it a mercy that missed me?" On the whole, he was more remarkable for presence of mind than piety; but his sole excuse for being in Holy Orders was a legacy left him on condition that he entered the Church, so I have reason to think these incidents exceptional, even in his own day; by mine they had become impossible, though intemperance was still cultivated by other professions. I remember two barristers who, on their way home after midnight, came across some scavengers at

work with horse-driven sweepers, and bribed them to crown the evening's entertainment by holding Ben-Hur chariot races round Merrion Square. . . .

Students were supposed to be exceptionally gifted in the art of intoxication—merely because young men, taking a firm stand in the dock after a night of revelry and frantic mirth, usually described themselves as 'students,' just as raffish London women matriculating in the police courts want to be written down as 'actresses.' It did not matter very much what calling was selected, since the magistrates had the same tariff for clerk or carpenter, nobleman or nonentity. An admission of guilt, coupled with a promise to reform, was rewarded with a five-shilling fine; a plea of 'not guilty' incurred a penalty of ten shillings; and any attempt at a reasoned defence was checked by a punishment of one pound, or a week in prison. Thus did our Cadis follow the Prayer Book and truly administer very indifferent justice.

If students as a class did not deserve their reputation, some individuals tried to, especially those who lived in lodgings untrammelled by the Junior Deans, tutors, night-porters, and suchlike beasts of prey that harried the College resident along the steep and thorny path to a Diploma. These students became a distinct species known as 'chronics,' because their malady was beyond the wit of man to cure; they abided in one stay, taking no thought for the morrow, until their relatives fetched them back to the land, or inserted them into promising openings in the drapery

business. They were fluent spenders but reluctant learners. A street fiddler, to whom a Dublin musician had given some gratis lessons, was asked how he was getting on, and he replied thoughtfully, "Well, d'ye know, I don't think I'm any worse"; but even this quality of stationary progress (if I may so describe it) was denied to the 'chronic.' He cultivated social life, in the Dublin acceptation of the term, so enthusiastically that he was compelled to relinquish all but a nominal attendance at lectures, and park his books with a convenient pawnbroker; he rapidly forgot any scraps of knowledge he had picked up, and though he continued to present himself at examinations, it was rather from habit than with any expectation of passing them. He had few illusions about his own prospects, even when the examiners, wearied of his constant reappearances, hinted their entire willingness to meet him more than half way. A specimen of this type—Horan will serve for his name as well as his own—faced the ordeal every June for many years, except once when he was ill. On his next entry he was greeted with, "How are you, Horan? I hope you're quite recovered—we wondered what had become of you last time." He was offered the easiest possible questions, and missed them all with graceful readiness: even when the right answer was almost put into his mouth he rejected it in favour of some ingenious absurdity of his own, until the depressed examiner shook hands with him and said, "Good-bye, Horan . . . I hope to see you again."

After that Horan consented under pressure to

go to a crammer then held in high and merited esteem, because he had managed at the fourth attempt to goad a famous footballer through his final medical examination. The coach, having eliminated from the course what his experience told him would probably not be set, and also the extensive portion that Horan was too stupid to learn, pumped in the residue, as some people play wind instruments, by main strength and rote. But even that was of no avail. Part of the programme was physiology, for which candidates were admitted singly to a laboratory and required to identify sections of repulsive objects placed under a row of microscopes. The men towards the top of the list found means to communicate to those lower down the welcome news that the slide under the first microscope showed frog's blood; and a ray of sunshine penetrated, as it were, the general gloom of the seance. But the physiologist grew suspicious, and substituted a drop of his own blood. The next victim to enter was Horan. He throttled the tube of the microscope with a hand well accustomed to the smooth cylindrical surface of a porter bottle, and gave the slide an erudite scrutiny which he trusted would create a favourable impression at the outset. His very little learning had festered to the danger point: he knew that the blood of a frog was indistinguishable from that of certain other classes of the lower animals; and pushing the nose of the instrument through the cover glass with a triumphant twist of the fine adjustment, he broadcasted his conclusion: "This is the blood of a reptile."

"That," said the physiologist, "is a matter of opinion."

As Horan was not astonishing the University in the precise way his family expected, his uncle was deputed to travel from the shores of Lough Corrib and inquire whether he still kept up a bold struggle with the study of medicine, or had dismissed the idea as impracticable. The uncle did not reach town till late at night, and after depositing his bag at a hotel, he ordered the cabman to drive straight to the house on the South Circular Road where his nephew lodged.

"Does Mr Horan live here?" he asked the elderly landlady who opened the door.

"Och, indade he does; ye can dthrag him in and lave him on the flure," she answered.

The credulity of even the closest relations has its limits. Horan's explanation that his life of indoor brain-work had subjected him to frequent attacks of fainting had only a *succès d'estime;* and it was decided to send him out to Australia, where he would have a good chance of growing up with the country. So he passed from our midst. "Take him for half-and-half, I ne'er shall look upon his like again." One last glimpse of him came in a letter from a fellow exile, which I here transcribe:—

"By the way, did I tell you we ran across Horan? I saw a man coming towards us one day in the bush, and I knew there was something queer about him, but as I hadn't my glasses on, I couldn't make out what it was until he got close, and then I saw he was dressed in a blue shirt and the pants

of a suit of pyjamas, and he had a pair of trousers tied round his neck. 'What the divil are ye laughing at?' he says, and then I spotted it was Horan by the voice. 'I wasn't laughing, Horan, old son,' I said, 'but I thought your costume was a little striking.' He hadn't recognised me, either, till then, and we had a great chat over the old days. He hasn't done very well since he came out. He said he had only one pair of trousers and he wanted them for town, but the pyjamas would do first-class where he was. He had sprouted a beard like a virgin forest, but he hadn't altered much otherwise—it was as good as having a drink to have a talk with him. . . . I saw him again last Labour Day in Sydney. They had a great procession with all the Trade Unions carrying flags and banners, and at the tail of it comes Horan waving a streamer with 'God save Ireland' on it. He wanted to raise that issue—just to see if any one had anything to say against it."

It has been remarked that the tourist is your only true Conservative: he always likes to see things as they were. But I doubt if the most Tory of tourists could disapprove of the change that has taken place in the Irish attitude towards drink. By the generation preceding my own it was not thought very disgraceful in a reputable citizen to be found drunk on the public streets. Where I lived as a boy, the pride of our suburban police-barracks was a constable, six feet seven inches high, and so magnificently proportioned that his stature became noticeable only when he was with ordinary men, over whom he towered like a liner beside her

tugs. His special duty seemed to be to restore to their families those residents who had been ejected from the pot-houses of the district in a condition of extreme languor and ennui; and he did it with such kindly nonchalance that there was no moaning at the bar when he put out to see the topers home. Twice or thrice a year I used to watch him march past our windows carrying, literally in his arms, a small neighbour whom he would deliver at the proper doorstep with as much sangfroid on both sides as if that method of transit were another triumph of modern invention. This neighbour (I shall call him Reilly) comes luridly before me after close upon forty years as the only exception I know to the rule that drink never makes an Irishman any better. I have heard of the ripe scholar whose cargo of learning must be awash in his hold before it can be fairly appraised; of the brilliant conversationalist whose wit sparkles at its brightest only when he has enough just cause in his stomach and an impediment in his speech; and of the entrancing musician who brings tears of whisky and water to the eyes of audiences at smoking concerts after he has been propped up at the piano and his fingers have been guided to the keys; but I have never seen them. When the Irishmen I met began to show any effects at all from liquor, they grew maudlin, imbecile, or truculent, truculence predominating: as in the case of the man, ordinarily the most genial of mortals, to whom an inoffensive colleague passed a friendly 'Good-evening' at a Mansion House ball, and got the response: "Ye bloody little whelp . . . I'll cut the liver out of

ye!" I recollect a man in whom beer aroused such a melancholy sense of the transitoriness of life that he invariably sought the nearest graveyard, and brooded amongst the tombs until he fell asleep, and was removed in due season by the caretaker; and another, who drew from it a passion for abstract speculation, and after an hour or so of alcoholic silence would break out: "There's a subject that might crop up any time—say you were out walkin' with a girl and she might say somethin' in the course of conversation about the ultimate basis of our ideas of Space . . ." I remember yet another, who was moved by spirits to readjust his environment in accordance with an ultra-fastidious temperament, and fell into disfavour on an excursion to the Isle of Man through remonstrating with his fellow-passengers for being sea-sick. . . .

May I digress for a few lines? Thank you. During a visit of the Atlantic Fleet to Kingstown this gentleman was returning (in a condition of exemplary sobriety, according to his own account) to his bungalow beside the Dodder at an hour when the streets were almost deserted. As he plodded up the long, long trail of Rathgar Road, he became aware of strange lights wheeling and flashing in the sky, and after considering them attentively he looked about for somebody to discuss them with. The first person he saw was the policeman on the beat, to whom he addressed himself: "I say, constable, could you tell me whether that is the Aurora Borealis, or searchlights from the men-of-war?" The policeman, who was

acquainted with his idiosyncrasies, answered cautiously: "I do not know, sorr; but whether 'tis the Aurora Boreaylis, or the searchlight, if I were you I wouldn't be intherfeerin' wid thim."

But to return to Reilly: nobody could deny that he was definitely improved by a slight degree of intoxication. Sober, he was a competent and painstaking violinist, good enough to be admitted to an average theatre orchestra, but absolutely devoid of the divine fire. With three glasses of whisky under his belt he became inspired, and in his favourite music approached greatness: for a couple of hours he could both understand and interpret. On that level he remained until he had his seventh dose; and then he would suddenly tumble on the floor, as if he had been pole-axed. That spectacle is another reason why I remember him too well. Part of Dickens's power is due, I am convinced, to his having been brought into immediate and hateful contact with the seamy side of life while he was still very young—when the ugly aspects of things make their strongest emotional impact. The adult who catches an acquaintance tipsy merely reflects that different people amuse themselves in different ways; to the child there is revealed one of the horrors of the world. Drunkenness out of doors was too familiar to me to be remarkable; but to see a guest in my own home collapse into a hiccoughing bundle of clothes left an indelible impression. Never since has a human being seemed to me to be funny when drunk; nor can I regard the habit with easy Irish tolerance as 'a good man's weakness.'

The development of temperance in Ireland has been attributed to the higher cost of intoxicants owing to the war. I heard the same explanation put forward during and after the Boer War; but the process began long before either of these events, though it may have been accelerated by rising prices. I should be inclined myself to connect it with the gradual spread of civilisation, if I could observe any other grounds for saying that the Ireland of Collins, Breen, & Co. was any more civilised than the Ireland of the Invincibles and the Phœnix murders. Still, whatever may account for it, the cheerful fact remains that in this respect, at any rate, we have made real progress. It is years since I saw a badly drunken man on the streets of an Irish town; yet when I was a lad such an object was as common as a lamp-post. I remember once having to escort a girl cousin to Broadstone Station, the Dublin terminus of the Midland Railway. We jumped on a hackney car and told the driver to hurry or we should lose the train. To my surprise he took a roundabout course through Rutland Square.

"Why don't you go by Dominick Street?" I asked.

"Because it's Satherday night, an' it'll be sprawlin' wid dhrunk wimmen," he said.

"Oh . . . aren't there any drunk men here?" demanded my cousin a little tartly, not relishing the sex discrimination.

"Ay, there's a power of thim, Miss; but a dthrunk man has some sense, an' a dthrunk woman has none at all," replied the jarvey.

Reilly's career covered the alteration in public opinion. He was past middle age when I was entering my 'teens; and by then, his peculiarities (which had never previously raised a comment more harsh than the indulgent chuckle we bestow on the oddities of a valued friend) began to be censured by the more austere as suggesting a lack of refinement and good taste: the notion seemed to creep abroad that there was something not quite edifying about a line of conduct which eventually landed him in a lunatic asylum and his daughter in a brothel. Not that such an idea ever penetrated Reilly's mind; after the outbursts, which naturally came at shorter and shorter intervals, he would reappear as spruce and jaunty and untroubled as if he were well on the road to affluence and walking fast. My father called at his house during his later evolution, and was introduced to a quiet visitor smoking a clay pipe, who joined pleasantly in the talk, and did not differ to any noticeable extent from the company usually to be found there. When my father was leaving, he said to Reilly: "I didn't catch your chum's name. Who is he?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? That's the broker's man," said Reilly unassumingly, and yet with a certain modest pride at being so closely associated with the workings of our great Constitution. He was destined to come into still closer touch with it before he finished. He belonged to the incorrigible type of drunkard, the type that recovers with amazing rapidity from each bout and has no headache on 'the morning after' to give physical

support to any psychological repentance that may exist. So long as he confined his hilarity to his leisure, he was efficient enough at his business, and his firm did not suspect how often he put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains; but as he grew older, his self-control, such as it was, weakened, and he would arrive at his desk in such a condition that only the aid of his fellows could save him from disaster. Their help was always given, partly because he was liked by those who did not suffer through his excesses, and partly from the not ungenerous desire of workers to stand by their comrade against their masters. "Mr Reilly is very reticent this morning," was the euphemism adopted by his room-mates to warn the Chief Clerk that he was speechless; whereupon the Chief Clerk would invent an occupation for him in the cellars or some distant region beyond the range of the heads of the firm. But he took to vanishing altogether from the office for periods too long for the most strategic of clerks to conceal or the most forbearing of managers to overlook; and during one of these unexplained absences a colleague enlisted the services of Reilly's brother-in-law to extract the truth from Mrs Reilly. She plunged into an elaborate story about a telegram from a dying relative which had summoned Reilly to London by the night mail without leaving him five minutes to spare for an explanatory message; but his brother-in-law would have none of it. "What's the use of talkin' all this balderdash to us, Sally?" he interrupted. "We're tryin' to save his job. Where is he?"

" In jail," whimpered poor Sally.

He was speedily bailed, and his employers, out of pity for his miserable wife, condoned his lapse. I do not know what plausible tale he told them, but I fear it wanted the assurance of the clerk in the Department of Agriculture who left his place one Monday morning shortly after twelve, and did not return until the afternoon of the following Thursday: he went straight to the Head of his Branch, and apologised unreservedly for the length of time he had taken over his lunch.

I once spent a month in the same house with a contemporary of Reilly who was still actively directing the prosperous concern he had created. I was informed that such as he was then, so he always had been; and I never saw him sober. He must have greeted the dawn with a libation in his own room, for at breakfast he was hilarious, and by mid-day fuddled. He would retire after lunch to sleep for a couple of hours, and turn up mellow for dinner, from which an unbroken series of nips and tots and 'half-ones' would help him over the tedious interval until he could stagger, maudlin, to bed. " He'd eat whisky," said an observer; and yet, from the point of view that measures success by cash, he had done well in the world.

When I entered the Civil Service, my first chief gave me a word of advice. " You're a young fellow, anxious to get on," said he. " I'll tell you what to do. Bring out your seniors and stand them all the drinks you can. Testing the surface tension of a pint of beer doesn't hurt chaps of your age,

but it plays Old Harry with men at mine—kills 'em off like flies, and leaves room for promotion." I guessed he was not quite sincere, for I had also heard him observe: "The time to stop drinking is when you feel quite sure it hasn't had the slightest effect on you: that's one of the signs. It isn't the 'What will you have?' that does the mischief: it's the 'Two more of the same, miss, please!'" As I have mentioned previously, we had some officials who threw themselves, heart and soul, into the practice indicated by the famous aphorism: "Work is the curse of the drinking classes," but they were in a very small minority, though a few still boasted about their powers of consumption on festal occasions. "Four bottles of whisky we had last night, and two of champagne," said one of these, "as well as the non-intoxicants."

"What do you mean by non-intoxicants?" I inquired, knowing that he and his companions had no mad lust for mineral waters.

"Why, the ale and stout for the sober fellows," he said.

But respectable people no longer made a merit of soaking themselves into sodden oblivion; gout ceased to be a mark of caste and delirium tremens of social talent; if men drank more than was good for them, they attributed the visible results to indigestion or neuritis. A story was told of a father and son whose orbits had not intersected for many months until they chanced to meet in College Green on Christmas Eve. Warm greetings were exchanged, and the father said, "Now, my boy, what about a glass of wine to celebrate this?"

"Really, governor, I don't touch anything of the kind," protested the son.

"I've practically given it up myself," said the father. "Still . . . it's the festive season, and just to show there's no ill-feeling——"

They adjourned to the Bodega, where the barmaid greeted them with, "Merry Christmas, gentlemen. The same as usual, I suppose?"

I cannot vouch for the truth of this, but the fact that it was told and believed showed how the general outlook had changed: people felt they should affect the virtue, if they had it not. When another parent, whom I knew, had to endure a visit from his clerical brother-in-law, a militant teetotaller, he used to say to his eldest child, then a schoolboy: "Join me in a pint of stout, Edward." But as Edward said to me: "If he caught me looking at a cork when uncle wasn't there, he'd lift the skin off me."

Men who take up drink seriously do not, as a rule, fret their wearied consciences over unpaid small debts; and since there is a legal difficulty about recovering the price of spirits sold on credit, most Irish publicans adhered strictly to the policy of cash down. But Delahunty, licensed victualler in ordinary to the Land Commission, put no such sordid limit to his dealings with Civil Servants, and sometimes, though I am glad to say rarely, he had to suffer accordingly. A clerk, nicknamed 'Slippery Mike,' from which I inferred a tinge of unpopularity, was transferred to us from an office in a more circumspect quarter. "He's a shy chap—very shy. He won't ask you for a drink, but

he'll stand round while you are having yours . . . and wait," was the character that came with him. His *modus operandi* was to peer into bars until he saw a couple of acquaintances in animated talk, when he would edge between them, exclaiming cordially: "It's a damn shame"; for what but a grievance could excite Irishmen, and might not ready sympathy obtain a deserved reward? After working this coup successfully, he would follow it up by saying to his temporary host: "You're a rale dacint skin; lend me a shillin' and I'll stand you one now." Altogether a man of resource. When he heard of our attractive local custom, he set himself the congenial task of running up the largest possible bill in the shortest possible time, and soon lowered bogey for the course. "That new gintleman from your place is a prince, sir, a perfect prince," was Delahunty's first impression. After ten days or so a note of doubt crept into his judgment. "He's a nice boy . . . drinks a bit too much, though." I heard no further comments until I was told that Delahunty had been seen looking like a man who had sustained a sad bereavement, or whose liver was not doing the right thing by him.

"What do you think of Mike now?" he was asked.

"An infernal robber!" was the answer.

Thus approval passes into censure; which reminds me of a rebuke administered to a young physician I knew. Having a headache, he went into a chemist's shop for some salicylate of soda and caffein.

"D'ye drink much?" queried the compounder indulgently as he prepared the mixture.

"Not very," said the doctor, who, in fact, was a total abstainer, but thought it advisable to modify a truth so *prima facie* incredible. Nevertheless the chemist was hurt at what he plainly regarded as want of confidence between two men of the world. "Well, I've shifted a few gallons of Guinness, meself, before this," he remarked. "But I've been much better since I gave it up." Here he glared with intention. "Much better," he repeated.

J. C. Taylor, formerly one of the two Secretaries of the National Education Office in Dublin, was the author of another unexpected reproof. He had as unruly an establishment to control as any man was ever cursed with: the proportion of hard drinkers and astute work dodgers was large even for the Irish Civil Service of the last century. He was never known to dismiss any one; and if the most idle and dissipated of his flock thought the moment was ripe to avert a worse fate by resigning, Taylor would give him a testimonial which would almost compel the belief that a brighter constellation of excellencies had never glorified a Government Department. On the other hand, he maintained the discipline of a martinet, and inspired terror in the most reckless members of a reckless staff with no other weapon than a vitriolic tongue. One day a humble junior named Christie, who had been sent with a message to Dublin Castle, slipped into a public-house on his way back and refreshed his fading memory of

the taste of whisky. Coming out, he spied Taylor striding along the opposite footpath, and thought that Taylor had sighted him also; but being no mean tactician, he whipped round the corner and dived into a grocery, whence, anon, he emerged with his heart in his boots and his mouth full of cloves to hide any treacherous aroma that might still linger on his lips. As he dreaded, when he re-entered the office he was met by the hall porter with the announcement, "The Secretary wishes to see you at once, sir." The prospects seemed favourable for at least a heavy fine, and he dragged himself up the stairs, his knees interfering with each other all the way. "Come here . . . I want you to look at this," ordered Taylor, as Christie halted just inside the door. Christie advanced a couple of inches closer, and was again swinging to anchor when Taylor waved him imperiously to the table. "Come beside me, man!" he barked. "You can't see from there." Christie crawled into position, and Taylor sniffed—a long sniff, full of concentrated suspicion and venom. He glared; and then opened his Rhadamanthine jaws in the words of doom: "What a horrible smell of cloves! For heaven's sake, run out and get a glass of whisky to take it off your breath."

CHAPTER VII.

BELLES LETTRES.

"Un styliste est un homme qui croit que la parole nous a été donnée pour elle-même."—FERDINAND BRUNETIERE.

"The great art of a writer shows itself in the choice of pleasing allusions."—ADDISON.

"THERE'S a quare wan," said a colleague of mine, looking up from an almost blank sheet of note-paper, after much futile rumpling of his hair and mastication of the end of his pen. "When I was courtin' I could fill eight pages in twenty minutes, an' now I can't think of enough to make a dozen lines to the missus in half an hour." The difficulty is, I believe, not uncommon. Some men are at a loss for words immediately they desert the high-road of their routine correspondence; others run out of felicitous ideas when they have to compose a duty letter of any sort; and most of us are stricken dumb when we have to return thanks for a present we do not want, or offer congratulations on the marriage of a relative we dislike. But there is one thing that will incite almost any Irishman to blister paper with crimson words,

and that is a grievance, which, if he has the smattering of an education, he embellishes with tawdry rhetoric that comforts his soul as much as it obscures the issue. John Morley was astonished at a would-be contributor to the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' who said that his forte was invective—not at a particular person or class or party, but just general invective. Had Morley known his Ireland better, he would not have been surprised. A talent for miscellaneous invective is one of our national heritages; we perceive our private wrongs as public calamities, and deal with them accordingly; and since the Civil Servant is the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual disgrace which is called Government, the Irish Civil Servant rapidly grows accustomed to imputations of the lowest motives and the foulest actions. To these he turns a deaf ear and the other cheek; and it is not even a cheeky cheek; for he knows that Time is his friend, that to the Department a thousand years are as one day, and that he will draw his salary with equal regularity whether he is opening a new file or adding to the heap on an old one. He sublimates the primitive desire to bandy repartees with his assailants, and becomes immune to rebukes, promises, sarcasm, and threats. The most virulent insult rarely provokes him to a retort more acrid than: "I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the –th inst., and to regret that the Department has nothing to add to its previous communication on the subject." But his frigid courtesy does not always stem the epistolary flood. There was an old lady who waged a long

paper warfare with the Dublin Board of Works; and when they fell back upon their last line of defence, she launched a frontal assault: "If you are my obedient servants, as you keep on saying you are, why don't you rebuild my cowshed?" The logic was unanswerable, so it remained unanswered.

What reply ought to have been sent to the following, which came in response to an official circular asking if the writer were still in occupation of his cottage plot?

"GINTLEMEN,—I have resaved your kind letter and glad I am to tell yous I am in the best of health and sperrits as this leaves me though how yous gintlemen knew I was so bad with the lumbago this winter bates me. Ive nothing to complain of only Peter Mahonys bloody ould gander that lives next me (I told John Dillon about him) and does be always tearin over my wee bit of garden and has everything destroyed in it. yous cuddint grow as much as a potato in it. hopin yous gintlemen will look into it and see justice done. your humble servant,

A—— B——"

P.S.—Do yous think he ought to be shot."

Nobody could be quite sure whether the 'he' referred to the gander, Peter Mahony, or John Dillon, and there was some talk of wiring 'Yes' and awaiting the result to clear up the doubt; but it came to nothing.

All the recipients of that form did not accept it so pleasantly. The clerk who issued it was once the target for four pages of indignant repudiation of the insult implied in asking a respectable man if he still occupied his farm, when every one knew he had been there since his poor father died and didn't owe a penny to anybody, and never had trouble with the police like other people who could be named. The clerk was equal to the situation, and sent an answer to the effect that if Mr —— would forward a statutory declaration that he was still alive, the vesting would take place without delay. This reminded me of a Roumanian official who, during the revision of the Bukharest electoral register, issued the following warning :—

" Major A. Fanutza,—It is hereby brought to your notice that your name has been struck off the list of electors for deputies and senators in the First District, and will not again be inserted on it.

" The reason for this is the fact that your death occurred some time ago."

I have also been shown a memorandum from a Regional Medical Officer objecting to examine an insured person about whose physical condition he thought there could hardly be any difference of opinion : " It is not clear what grounds the Approved Society had for disbelieving this member's incapacity for work on the 14th of June, seeing that he died on the 20th of May." But I have no suspicion of plagiarism in any of the cases ; I am convinced that all three were due to native genius coupled with the acquired instinct of the trained

civilian to have formal things put in proper formal order.

Few Irishmen could be so concise as the Egyptian fellah who wrote to the Colonel of an English regiment at Cairo: "One of your damned Tommies has run off with my wife. By God I am vexed." If an Irishman lost sixpence through official action or neglect, he would begin his lamentation with at least four pages of able generalities on the iron heel of Prussianism and his own services to his party and religion; then he might outline the facts; but he would soon return, after the manner of Beethoven, to variations on the original theme, and probably conclude with a few picturesque menaces. I remember one letter which, after much windy description of the tempest of wrath that was sweeping through the justly incensed country at the Department's refusal to grant the writer a concession to which he was not entitled, ended thus: "I shall not indulge in threats, but if this case is not immediately settled in my favour, it will be ventilated to your everlasting discredit in Parliament and the public press." A woman who had been struck off Unemployment Benefit tried to terrorise the Ministry of Labour in a novel way: "If you do not restore my dole at once I shall go to work on Monday." Another was more conciliatory: "I cannot understand why you have stopped my money after me filling up all the papers, but if you will put down what I ought to say to get it back I will sign and oblige."

This is by no means the only example I have seen of such a broad-minded desire to facilitate

business, though it is not often so openly avowed; many Irishmen regard an assertion put forward in their own interest as a matter of form, which may be repudiated without the least shame if it proves inconvenient. When I asked a member of one of the learned professions who had infringed an official rule, why he had told us a series of patent and inartistic fictions, he explained that he thought it was only the beginning of the correspondence. But the prize for candour in my little collection goes to a postscript variation on the usual 'without prejudice' clause: "*P.S.*—If my just claim is not allowed, I hold myself free to withdraw and deny any statement I may have made in this letter."

Claims to old-age pensions were prolific of eloquence, and naturally the most vigorous and persuasive letters came from persons whose sole title was that they would like the money. One man wrote: "I have one son and one wooden leg, and therefore I think I have a right to a pension." The widow of a pensioner pressed her own claim with startling syntax: "My youngest is eleven months old, and he drew the old-age pension before he died." Another woman made her plea for compassionate allowance on the ground that she was "in a very pregnant state of health—if you know what I mean." I must confess I underrated the seriousness of this condition until I saw a message from a lady whose Health Insurance Society had refused to pay her sickness benefit because her doctor did not certify her to be incapable of work, notwithstanding that she was

three or four months pregnant. In her appeal against this decision she wrote: "I think it is very wrong for mere men to be making laws about such things which are settled by a Supreme Power Above. As you very well know, there is no disease more fatal than pregnancy."

I was once shown a typed letter on the same subject from a firm of solicitors, who argued that their client was particularly entitled to credence because she was not only respectable herself but also "very respectively connected." At first I rushed to the conclusion that the shorthand-typist had blundered in deciphering her own hieroglyphics; but when I discovered that the client was the mother of three illegitimate children, I thought again. Typists and printers have often to bear odium that should rightly be bestowed elsewhere, but they are human and do sometimes err. A colleague of mine had dictated: "Your claim has been statutorily disallowed, and you have been duly informed," which the stenographer improved into: "Your claim has been satisfactorily disallowed, and you have been dully informed." While he realised that the change from his own trite words was in the interests of accuracy and truth, he thought it was an esoteric truth, inexpedient for publication to the vulgar. In a different branch of the Service a barrister once addressed, in his own illegible handwriting, a letter to a very important person indeed, as 'J. Smith, Esq., C.B.'; but the typist altered it to 'J. Smith & Co.,' in which form it went forth to provoke a minor

cyclone that took several pages of apology to abate. For the rest of his career that barrister lived as though eternal vigilance were the price of peace : he read everything twice before signing it, and insisted on comparing printed copies of the same document with each other as well as with the original.

Another typist's error gave rise to some little misunderstanding with the Local Government Board. During a tour on Public Health work, one of their inspectors noticed that the communal pump in a small western town was suffering from some obscure bronchial trouble, and delivered small gushes of brackish water only at the cost of prolonged and energetic labour at the handle. Accordingly, he recommended that a new pump should be provided. The typist who copied his report for submission to the Town Council accidentally changed ' pump ' into ' pub.,' and the slip was not observed before a copy left the office. When the minutes of the next meeting of the Town Council arrived at headquarters the Commissioners were surprised to read : " The Council then entered into consideration of the recommendation from the Local Government Board that a new pub. should be set up in the town. Two members thought that the existing supply of nineteen pubs. furnished sufficient facilities for twelve hundred inhabitants, but the majority of those present viewed the suggestion with considerable interest and favour. As, however, the Council had no previous experience of the provision of pubs.

out of public funds, they would like further information on the result of similar enterprise in other districts before embarking upon it themselves."

Of pubs. in general, the Ireland of my youth held, as Wordsworth held of his own poems, that while some might be better than others, none were without merit. Later on I observed a growing tendency towards captious discrimination. During the war a grocer in an Irish village retired, and it became necessary to transfer his supplies of sugar to another retailer suggested to the Food Control Committee by the local District Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Nobody objected except one matron, who wanted to know why she was compelled to go for her weekly half-pound of sugar to a low public-house such as she had never entered before, and would die sooner than enter now. She added, in the right Hibernian mode, that in all probability the choice was the result of a substantial bribe. In the words of a once famous theatrical poster, the Committee had "no answer to that vulgar taunt," but they wrote to the Inspector to produce his excuse, if any, for recommending so disreputable an establishment. He replied that the new dealer had the largest and best-conducted grocery in the townland; and as for the complainant, he had just detailed two of his men to carry her home from the village street, where he found her, dead drunk, in the gutter.

When we open an anonymous letter we expect to see hypocrisy, envy, and malice, and we are rarely disappointed. Consider this effort in the *genre*:—

"SIR,—I hear you are going to give a pension to Mrs O'Flarty of Brickville Lane. If you did its a great shame. She is getting 5s. from her son Tom in the Army. She has one girl in the mills bringing home good mony every week as well as what she got from her husbands burial club. She has two children at home learning Music. And if she gets any more Inniscarret won't hold her.

Your Christian well-wisher."

Please observe the periodic style, emphasised by indignant single and double underlining, as it sweeps up to the great climax. Observe also the unassuming piety of the signature—a frequent characteristic of those who do their public good deeds by stealth, and barely let their right-hand neighbour know what their left-hand neighbour doeth. Here is another :—

"DEAR SIR,—In these disturbing times we are coming through I am a Christian to do my duty both to my fellow man and to God principally I think it neither a harm nor a sin to let you know in time that a lot of people round X—— are applying for sugar cwts and more when one pound would make all the jam that is in their gardens. This is for food hoarding for tea and intertaining friends to fancy pastry &c. In traveling on Christian service here and there and everywhere among all creeds and I see that you would not think the world was at war at all women that used to be beggars almost now getting government money

for sons and husbands and leaving it out foolishly. I think things should be done a little fair. It is but right jam should be made where they really have fruit. I have two hundred damsels growing rotten for want of sugar but if a person was to die for a grain more than their supply I wouldnt get it and owing to the scarcity of butter I would like more jam.

AN OBSERVER."

That, I think, is enough of a nauseous tribe, happily rare in Ireland, where even the palpable lunatics are often courteous and accommodating. As thus :—

"KIND SIR AND GENTLEMAN,—I received your forms for sugar for demodest[1] use after the 22nd on Friday the 24th of April and as I have no sugar-card number to send you but could send you the number of my parent's grave if you like, but could not send my eldest brother's as he died in a lunatic asylum as a substitute for H. Thaw if you remember that case in America.

"And I am returning you your forms so as in due time you can enjoy the goodly fruits of the earth as I am too late.—Your faithful,

A—— B——."

I have a firm belief that being misunderstood is a prerogative of the well-to-do classes who can afford to cultivate hobbies like brain storms or

[1] Domestic ?

hypochondria. A starving man always makes his meaning very clear; and so do the illiterates when they are driven by necessity to take pen in hand: the purpose shines unmistakably through the cloud of bad spelling and confused syntax and provincial idiom. I shall not insult the reader's intelligence by a commentary on the following human document, which came from a girl accused of leaving her work of her own accord: "I never left without any cause. I left because the meat wasnt good and the pay was wee wages 12/6 and give my mother 9 shillings out of that and then buy myself clothes and boots out of that and when I asked her for a holiday she refused and the butter that was set down was margarine and if you went out she had you timed not to let you go to any funerals."

The letters that are sent out from Government Departments are rarely as entertaining as those that come in. There is a traditional style of official communication (which "Q" rudely calls jargon) that does not lend itself readily to epigram. New clerks, who enter through the commonplace competitive examination, adopt it insensibly, and learn to expound their thoughts with as liberal a use of "having regard to" and "in further connection with" as the topic seems to require; but the Business Men who came to save the country from us, and us from ourselves, during the war were not so slavishly imitative. They wanted something with pep and punch in it, and cultivated a style more direct than ours; as was illustrated in the classic case of the pig owner in England who

was afraid that he might be prosecuted for food hoarding. He rang up the nearest Food Control Committee and asked if he could slaughter the animal and divide the carcase amongst his friends. The Business Man who answered the telephone said it was a knotty point, but he would think it over and send a decision by post. He did. It ran as follows—

"*Re* killing pig.

"There is no objection to this if done in moderation."

Had a Civil Servant of the older school chanced to light on that wonderful thought, he would have felt it his duty to clothe it in courtlier garb. Our civilian ancestors were choice in their diction, as became gentlemen and conscious historians of the day. They set their prose to a solemn music; they balanced their sentences with stately antitheses, and closed their paragraphs with a cadence as of thunder dying on a distant horizon. What could be more satisfactory than the Treasury Minute on compulsory retirement at the age of sixty-five? "In the opinion of My Lords of the Treasury, this regulation had the great advantage that it relieved Heads of Departments of the painful and invidious duty of suggesting to a meritorious public servant that his powers were beginning to fail." And that dignified *adagio lamentoso* was no solitary and accidental inspiration: it was almost their common form. Undoubtedly, on one occasion a letter was compounded by the Treasury entirely out of words

of one syllable for the easier comprehension of a Department which had proved deaf to their ordinary majestic harmonies; but it was never issued. The founders and inheritors of the traditional style were constrained to a certain formality by the slow-motion quill pen. They might acquire a peculiar hardness of touch; they rarely stimulated the imagination or aroused passionate enthusiasm; they appealed to the head rather than the heart; they liked facts that could be presented in tabular statements and worked out in averages to three places of decimals; but they never forgot that they were of "those whose experience has enabled them to judge at leisure and decide with authority." Nowadays we have little leisure and less authority. The advent of the lady shorthand typist marked the end of the old era.

"The sunshine is a glorious birth,
But yet I know, where e'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

It is impossible to elaborate something in The Grand Manner while a damsel, if not with a dulcimer, at least with a fine set of front teeth, which she can use for similar purposes, is impatiently tapping fox-trots on them with the end of a pencil; or to recall the sole subtly appropriate word you want while she is turning the pause to account by renovating that schoolgirl complexion with her powder-puff and colour sachet. Your coherence is likely to fail, and if you cannot make your con-

clusion agree plausibly with your premises, you rush on your goal with a hasty " It is therefore obvious," like an idle student smudging the working of a sum to bring out the correct answer he has found in the crib. Whenever I see that phrase I think of the cowboy who told Mr Rollins, " When a feller can't think up no more ideas to wave round and look purty, he just natcherally winds up with ' Wherefore it follows.' Follows ! Hell ! It don't follow nothin'. It just comes in last."

It is no longer open to the Civil Servant to coerce, to intimidate, to impose his will under the ægis of his Department. If he is called upon to lay down the law, he must do it from the summit of a Sinai of conciliatory clichés ; he must insinuate his unpalatable truths so as to persuade and convince. The aim of the journalist is to evoke what he is pleased to call " human interest " by making the commonplace look startling. Thus a recent placard of a London paper bore the legend : " Theft from M.P.'s son-in-law "—the theory involved being that theft from the unknown son-in-law of an unknown Member of Parliament is much more remarkable than theft from a mere shopkeeper or clerk. On the same principle, the writers of ' special articles ' in the Sunday illustrated press, who are paid to be earnest and uplifting fifty-two times a year, shout very vigorously to conceal the fact that they have nothing to say : they must get the effect of light and leading somehow, and they do their best with Victor Hugo paragraphs and italics, thus—

" Yesterday is not to-day.
To-morrow will not be last week.
The Government *must act now*."

The policy of the Civil Servant is exactly opposite ; he will split an infinitive with any one to avoid even the semblance of novelty, and far from trying to put a keen edge on his words, he will smooth away the least phrase that might give a definite idea and thereby arouse hostility ; his glory is to introduce a revolution under cover of a platitude. If Parliament embodied the Ten Commandments in a new Act, I am convinced that the permanent Moses deputed to break the news to the public would frame the explanatory paragraphs of Circular X247 after this fashion—

" Artists and other persons engaged in the fabrication of graven images within the meaning of the Act will appreciate that while the Department does not intend to discourage legitimate enterprise in matters of this kind, there have been attempts during recent periods to exceed the very generous limits of realism laid down by previous statutes, which it is now incumbent upon the officers of the Ministry to restrain ; and the Courts have been empowered to inflict, after due warning, penalties not exceeding a fine of five pounds and/or ten days imprisonment on persons making, or attempting to make, the likeness of anything more specifically mentioned in the schedule attached.

" It is also important to notice that it is no longer open to members of the public to bear

false witness against neighbours, or any such persons as may reasonably be supposed to be neighbours, unless in the most exceptional circumstances and with the previously obtained sanction of the Department. Persons wishing to bear false witness, either on their own behalf or as agents for others, should therefore be careful to always previously approach the responsible officer of their district in regard to their proposed mode of procedure on forms FW4713, copies of which are on sale at all booksellers or may be obtained from H.M. Stationery Office at 2s. per thousand."

If the modern Civil Servant feels himself obliged to adopt this gelatinous manner in his public utterances, he has secured greater freedom in his communications on the official file. Formerly, all that was permissible was an elaborately reasoned statement of the facts, followed by a signed decision from the Head of the Branch, and occasionally the sacramental words, "I agree," over the initials of the august Chief of the Department. We have grown much easier in our comments and rulings, and even levity now sometimes raises her shameless head unchecked. Not long ago I was shown a file on which there was a certificate of vaccination put in as proof of age. The official who reported on the case referred to this document, accidentally, as a certificate of baptism, and opposite the last word there was a marginal correction: "No—vaccination. There is some technical difference between these two operations, though I forget exactly what."

But even yet we have not altogether deserted the laconic style. For example :—

An Assistant Secretary in one of the London Ministries met a whilom servant of his, a Jewess, who, in the course of talk, mentioned that she had not got any Health Insurance benefit when she was ill. He passed the information to an official he knew in Ireland, where the headquarters of the girl's Approved Society were situated, and the mills of Government began to grind out a new file. When I saw it, the last document on it was a letter from an agent of the Society, which ran somewhat thus (I quote from memory) : " I have interviewed the member, but she declines to say how long she was ill or to get a doctor's certificate of her incapacity, or even fill up a claim form. In fact, she seemed to be annoyed at the whole business, which, she said, had been set on foot by a former employer of hers without her consent and against her wishes. In the circumstances I could not do anything further."

Under this was a brief message to the original inquirer : " 2nd Kings, xix. 21."

I don't know whether the Assistant Secretary looked up the reference, but I did, and it read : " The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn ; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head against thee."

CHAPTER VIII.

A PROFESSOR OF SURGERY.

"The skill of the physician shall lift up his head: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration."—*Ecclesiasticus.*

IDLY turning over the pages of 'Who was Who'—a compilation more interesting than its current equivalent to the elderly—I came across the entry: "Bennett, Edward H., M.D., M.Ch.Dub., Ex-President and F.R.C.S.I. . . ." followed by the dates of his birth and death, and lists of the appointments he held and the papers he wrote. It aroused memories of a remarkable man, whose parallel is not likely to be found outside Ireland; and I began to wonder if I could add to the official account anything that would show why those who knew him called him, affectionately, 'the Boss,' and cannot now think of him as a mere Regius Professor of Surgery.

When I saw him first, we were in the middle of a clinic given by a brilliant young surgeon, who was teaching us that even lucidity may be made tedious. Suddenly a head popped round a corner, and an excited voice whispered: "I say, the Boss

is in"; and immediately student after student started to drift mechanically away as if he did not notice what he was doing. I had no wish to be left the Casabianca of the class, wrapped in the flames of the brilliant young surgeon's erudition; and so, while he was writing something valuable on the blackboard, I extended my formation in the direction of the door and tip-toed cautiously out. I had never heard of 'the Boss' before, and my curiosity was aroused. It was gratified in the next ward, where Bennett stood at a table, stirring something into a large bowl half hidden by a cloud of what I then took to be flour dust. "Come here, boys!" he was saying. "I want to show you how to make a plaster splint. You know I'm always trying to impress on you the value of observation; well, the important thing to attend to here is the face of the Sister behind me. She'll have to get her understrappers to clean up the basin and the mess I'm going to make on the floor—you can tell that, by the way she glares at me when she thinks I can't see her, for she's a tidy creature, and loves work no more than the rest of us. She'd like to kill me now, before my colleague, the chaplain, comes round; but if I looked at her, she'd smile as if I were her long-lost father home from Klondyke with a carpet-bag full of nuggets. . . . Be careful to wipe your feet on the mat, boys, before you go out, or it won't take a Sherlock Holmes to track you to the next pub. or two. . . ."

As I recall him, he was a tall, rather heavily-built man, with slightly bandy legs and a rolling gait. His head was large and bald, but magnificently

modelled. In repose, his expression was formidable and authoritative, for his clean-shaven face was rugged, warty, and weather-beaten, and he had a grim mouth, a long upper lip, and enormous bristling eyebrows; but when he smiled—I never heard him laugh—you felt at your ease at once: it was impossible to resist him or hesitate to trust him. He looked much more like a deep-sea pilot than a distinguished surgeon; and even now, when I think of him, my imagination insists on clothing him in a sou'wester and oil-skins; and if I were to see him clambering on board in a heavy gale off a rock-bound coast, I am sure I should feel safe the moment he got on the bridge.

His eyes were not hawk-like, in the lady novelist's sense: they did not pierce you through and through, or seem to read your very soul, or indeed do anything psychical or dramatic except twinkle when a joke was fermenting its way to the surface; but for all that, he saw the essentials of everything he wanted to see, and ignored the irrelevancies. If you overlooked something because it lay under your nose, he would say, "Boys, let me remind you again of my old master, Macartney. Over forty years ago he came into this dispensary and said to me, 'Bennett, bring me that case of early tetanus.'

"'Where?' said I.

"'Doctor,' said he, 'that's a thing a man passing by on a high-trotting horse couldn't help seeing. . . . In that corner—the chap with the queer grin. You've heard of *risus sardonicus*, haven't you? . . . There it is.'"

Anatomists who "hunt down the obvious with the enthusiasm of a short-sighted detective" are fond of big sonorous words to disguise the fact that they have found it; but though the Boss was human and had been an anatomist himself, he preferred the terms that everybody understood.

"What's that, Jones?" said he on one occasion, as he pointed at a deformed toe.

"I don't know precisely, sir, but I think it is a hypertrophied callosity superimposed on an adventitious bursa."

"I don't want all that damned pathology. . . . Look across the street there. D'ye see that old woman coming out of the pawnshop? What would *she* call it?"

"I couldn't tell, sir," said Jones, blushing at the idea of sharing as much as a fraction of his vocabulary with an old woman leaving (or even entering) a pawnshop.

"A bunion, man—and that's exactly what it is."

Jones did not contribute to the laughter that ensued; for though able and hard working, "he always took a joke as if you had made it beside the casket holding all that was mortal of his dear mother." His expression of pained bewilderment and outraged dignity haunts me still. Yet the Boss seldom hurt any one's feelings; and if, as in this case, he thought he had, he would put his hand on the victim's shoulder and say, "Don't take it to heart, son. Sure it's only the bloody old Boss. . . . I ragged you like that just to make you remember." For though there was much of

Rabelais and Falstaff in him, there was little of Swift.

Once I heard him say to his pupil, the brilliant young surgeon, who was looking pale and flurried, "How many abdominal sections have you done so far, Dick?"

"Five."

"And I suppose you lay awake half last night thinking of the one you're going to do now?"

"Indeed I did . . . it'll be a ticklish job."

"Well, I'll tell you a dodge: always begin with round numbers. Call this the one thousandth and sixth—you must have some compensation for your loss of rest. . . . I dropped in to-day because I thought you might feel more confident if you saw me hanging round the operating theatre. . . ."

When you appeared before him for your 'Final,' you would have quaked had you not known that he never bore malice; for he would look at you quizzically and greet you with, "I wonder you have the nerve to come here, you young scoundrel. You were always late, you threw snowballs during my lectures, you broke my pet specimen, you . . ." (Here would follow a catalogue of your delinquencies, which you hoped he had not noticed or else attributed to some one else.) "How can you expect me to let you through? The Regulations say: 'Graduates must be of good character and over twenty-one years of age.' . . . Are you over twenty-one? . . . Ah, well, perhaps we had better have an amnesty. Now, tell me, what would you do in a case of . . .?" And he would get out of you the best that was in you, asking leading

questions when you faltered. Then he would add, " You may have an easy mind to-day, son ; you've done very well with me. But make friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness. To-morrow you'll have to face Mr Slavin, who's Hell on tumours. . . . So read up his paper in last week's ' Lancet,' and quote it whenever you get a chance ; and if you don't get a chance, make one. Fannin's have a few copies left." And if he sighted you as he drove away, he would invite you with a flick of his whip to come up beside him on the high seat of his buggy ; and there he would joke as with an equal, and tell stories of the years before X-rays (" The last refuge of the incompetent surgeon," he used to call them) or even before anæsthetics, when patients were given a pint of brandy and held down by vigorous assistants during major operations—and one poor creature had bounded shrieking in torture from the table, and fled out across the snow-covered street with his jaw half amputated, and the surgeons in hot pursuit. And after an hour of his talk, you felt so well established in your conceit that you were ready to beard a thousand Slavins and puncture them with their own ' Lancets.'

Unlike most of the professors, Bennett marked the roll not at the beginning but at the end of his lectures, so that if you were late, the only penalties you incurred were the derisive applause of the class, and a comment from him on the not wholly creditable way in which you had presumably passed the previous night ; and if you arrived just as the others were preparing to leave, he would con-

gratulate you on being in time for the benediction. When you wanted to go to a football match or a race meeting which involved your missing an attendance altogether, it used to be the custom to get some one else to answer for you; and so far as you were concerned, all would be well, though the Boss, glancing at your substitute, might remark, "Oh . . . so that's you, Robinson . . . I shouldn't have known you but for your tie." Sometimes when we were all present to his ear and largely absent to his eye, he would look round the half-empty benches and say, "Boys, this place must be haunted." Once Smith, a sporting man, had some difficulty about finding a reliable deputy. Of the three possibles whom he asked, not one was certain to be there; but he took the risk and went to the Curragh. It so happened, however, that they all turned up; and when Smith's name was called, three not quite synchronous "Here's" were shouted from corners of the room widely apart. "What?" asked the Boss, marking Smith present. "Is he a Trinity?"

He made no attempt to keep order, save by interjecting appeals, which, as he well knew, would only have the opposite effect. Holding up his hand for silence, he would say, "Boys, you're the worst set of blackguards I've met in an experience of over thirty years; but be quiet a minute, for I want you to get this into your heads: cut the leg off the man, not the man off the leg. I've done that myself, but it's better not to, at least until you're successful humbugs—I mean, until you've made names for yourselves . . ." And the rest

of the sentence would be drowned in a fresh outburst of applause. When that subsided, he might continue, "And there's Mr So-and-so's operation for the excision of the wrist joint. Any one who hasn't pawned his text-book will find it mentioned on page —. It's beautifully devised to meet every possible objection. I was very enthusiastic about it; but somehow all the cases I tried it on found their way into museums. There are some upstairs now. I'll let you see one." Then he would ring his bell in a perfunctory way, knowing that his bemused factotum was generally asleep when wanted. But on one occasion he responded nobly to the call, and trotted about with an alertness that caused immediate consternation. When he had gone out, the Boss asked in the tones of one trying to reconcile himself to the incredible, "What's wrong with my Intelligent? He's been with me for twenty years now, and that's the first time I've seen him exhibit the faintest trace of sobriety."

An English surgeon came to one of Bennett's lectures to study our methods, and encountered the usual row. He was thunderstruck at first, but soon became so indignant that he rose from his seat and rebuked the rest of the audience. He had, he complained, travelled far to learn from Professor Bennett, the greatest living authority on bone disease in Europe, and he was not allowed to hear anything but shouts of laughter and the stamping of feet. The Boss cut him short. "How dare you, sir, interfere with my class?" said he. "Boys . . . throw him out!" And the stranger

soon realised that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, keeping order was our long suit.

When I saw Bennett last, more than twenty-five years ago, he took part in a scene that I have not yet forgotten. It was the end of a busy July morning in the out-patient department, where the sights and smells, however mitigated by custom, are always more instructive than agreeable. Hot and tired, we were all the more anxious to escape, because Trinity was playing an English eleven in the College Park. The Boss, tall hat in hand, was joking with his Resident; a nurse was clearing away the soiled dressings on which the flies were beginning to settle; the students were edging out; and the room would soon have been vacant had it not been for a middle-aged man of the sergeant-major type, who walked in aggressively and demanded the doctor.

"Here I am," said the Boss. "What's wrong?"

"I've a sort of festering wart on my tongue."

"Let's see it, then," said the Boss, adding after a glance and a touch, "Come back, boys, and look at this: it's a thing you won't meet with every day."

We came back, not too willingly; and even the novices could tell what it was. We eyed one another, but nobody made any comment.

"Will it be necessary to operate, sir?" asked the man.

"No, I don't think so," replied the Boss.

"What is it?"

"Cancer."

The man collapsed on a form, and seemed liter-

ally to shrivel. The buzz of a blue-bottle against the window became intolerably loud. Then the short strained pause was broken. "My God! My God! My wife and little children! What shall I do? What shall I do?" cried the patient.

"Try to bear it like a man," said Bennett, "and settle your affairs as soon as possible."

"How long can you give me?"

"About six months, perhaps. . . . I wish I could make it more, but it would be unkind to raise false hopes."

As the Boss spoke, he turned away and looked at me with a faint ironic smile, the import of which was lost upon the others; for they did not know, as I did, that he, too, was dying of inoperable cancer.

He went gently to the huddled heap on the bench, took its arm, helped it to its feet, and guided it to the door. The warmth seemed to have gone out of the sunshine; and for an eternal minute we all stood rigid and silent till the Boss shouted, "Be off with you, boys, or you'll miss the match."

CHAPTER IX.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

"Your reasons at dinner have been sharp and sententious; pleasant without scurrility, witty without affection, audacious without impudence, learned without opinion, and strange without heresy."—*Love's Labour's Lost.*

"He would talk like 'Half-Hours with the World's Best Authors,' and yet had nothing to say but words."—H. L. WILSON.

THE reputation of Ireland for producing good talkers is still strong enough to help many a dull dog like myself to an undeserved success when we are out of our own country. We traded on it unblushingly. The introduction, "My friend, Mr So-and-so from Dublin," was generally sufficient to crown our feeblest impromptus with the halo of national prestige; and we were rather disappointed if, on our mentioning that the weather looked unsettled, the other diners did not choke simultaneously in their soup. At home it naturally took more than a brogue to gild a platitude. The market was wide but critical. Men could appreciate the fine art of speech, no matter in what form it was displayed; and the cab-driver got as much applause for his 'good wan' as the University professor did for his most gentlemanly brutality.

In fact, it was the professor who was handicapped, for the deadly sin was pretence to superiority. "That fellow Malone's an awful man," said a colleague whom I met, steeped in despondency, on the sea wall at Clontarf one Sunday afternoon. "He came up to me half an hour ago when I was hangin' about waitin' for the pubs. to open, the same as every one else, an' d'ye know what he said to me? 'Emerson,' says he, 'Emerson has made me what I am.' It takes a lot of pluck to keep up your cheerfulness after hearin' a thing like that."

I recall, too, an incident told me by the late W. F. Bailey, who as a director of the Abbey Theatre and our Dublin half-crown Maecenas, was, like the Duke of Wellington, "much exposed to poets"; but unlike the Duke, he enjoyed playing the part of an enthusiastic amateur gardener amongst the crop of minor intelligentsia that grows so rankly under shelter on the unweeded Irish soil. He was returning from Cork with a poet, a playwright, and a lady whom her own suburb classed indifferently with Madame de Sevigne and Ethel M. Dell; and since each of the party was bent on seizing the instant by the forward top to impress his or her purple personality on the others, the conversation in the railway carriage became acutely high-class, "Very stimulating and instructive indeed, ma'am." At Portarlington, a pair of untaught knaves of the racing clan lumbered in and ventured a sociable word or two about the crops, but were soon silenced by the hallowed names of Tchevov and D'Annunzio and Synge, or whatsoever other deities were then

worshipped at shrines not quite abreast of the latest news from Olympus. As the train rattled through the autumnal twilight, and drifts of rain shrouded the dismal steppes of the Bog of Allen, the talk grew more and more exalted and the spirits of the bourgeois fell lower and lower until they began to ooze depression at every pore. At last one could bear his misery no longer, and, leaning across with woebegone face, he moaned piteously to his companion, "Jawn . . . for Gawd's sake . . . talk hawrses to me."

Seldom indeed are Irishmen unwilling to talk horses. During the war I had to summon a conference of Dublin merchants, including Mr Martin Fitzgerald, a flamboyant sporting man, whose fixed evils sat so fit in him that they took place when Virtue's steely bones looked bleak in the cold wind. I told him, over the telephone, that we expected the honour of his company on Thursday, and I was promptly blasted with a gush of profane expostulation followed by an irate query, "D'ye never say your prayers?" I said I did—at fitting moments and in a suitable manner—but what bearing had this harmless indulgence on the matter before us? "Don't ye know Thursday's the Curragh Races?" came the reply; and I realised that I was proposing to desecrate Martin's Sabbath. Like most of his countrymen, he shared Milton's sentiments:—

> "For other things, mild Heaven a time ordains,
> And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
> That with superfluous burden loads the day,
> And when God sends a cheerful hour—refrains."

Sport, politics, and the foibles of our acquaintances were undoubtedly the staple of Dublin conversation, but we called no topic alien to us. We should certainly have blushed to let mere ignorance of a subject hinder its intelligent consideration. On the contrary, many of us talked our best when we had to rely on our ingenuity for facts as well as logic. "It's great practice arguin' about somethin' you don't understand," said one of my quondam familiars. "Ye have to think like lightnin' what you're goin' to say, or the other fellow 'll have said it first." At another time I rallied him on his unusual silence. "I know enough about music to keep my mouth shut while it's being discussed," he explained. "I was in a choir once for a charity concert, and afther the second rehearsal the conductor drew me aside and told me mebbe I'd be more use to the great cause we all had at heart if I helped take up the tickets at the door. . . . Ye see, if ye just don't know anythin', ye can talk for the divarsion of it; but when ye know ye know nothin', ye grow terrible supercilious." Here Johnny was alluding to a pinchbeck Petronius who committed himself to the opinion that Mendelssohn's Ruy Blas Overture was very like the first movement of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and then could not discover a single point of resemblance. "They're both the same . . . ah . . . er . . .," said he, sparring for time. "Length?" suggested Johnny.

I sat beside him in a Debating Society where a bore was exhausting everybody's patience. He came to a series of splendid opportunities for

stopping, and missed them all. Suddenly Johnny began the courteous applause with which one acknowledges a peroration.

" I'm not finished," said the surprised orator.

" Oh . . . Sorry ! " said Johnny, who could not abide eloquence out of place. A transient member of our luncheon table was haranguing us on the beauties of married life and the selfishness of bachelordom. He was one of those who, as Mr Dooley says, " threat their wives like a rockin' chair, a great comfort when they're tired, but apt to be in the way at other times " ; while Johnny, out of a very slender salary, supported his sister and his widowed mother, so that I was not surprised to see him growing restive under the gale of flatulent idealism.

" Every man ought to get married," urged the wind-bag.

" Then he knows the worst," muttered Johnny.

" I tell you young unmarried fellows, if you wait long enough you'll meet your affinity . . ."

" . . . or your Waterloo," added Johnny. " I never congratulate a man on his marriage. I wait for a year, and then, if he hasn't taken to drink, I shake him by both hands."

Dublin always welcomed the man who could spin a yarn, turning lifeless fact into artistic entertainment with vivid gestures, dramatic expression, and a thousand touches of whimsical fancy. As I write, I can see the face of a former comrade glowing with the excitement of his own burlesque as he described a rough sea off Douglas and the s.s. *Empress Queen* " lyin' flat on her side and the

water pourin' down her funnels." Another, with a gift of mimicry, would improvise mythical conversations, chiefly as amongst persons he disliked, preserving not only their voice and manner but their tricks of speech and even their habits of thought; I remember him holding an office group long after the regular closing hour with a fictional dialogue between two of our Examiners who were postulated to have seen a halfpenny simultaneously on the floor—one confining himself to truculent reiterations of ownership, the other insinuating his claim with ironic suavity: "You are reahally not doing youahself justice, my· deah fellow. Put the mattah fayhly befoah you." But talent of this kind perishes with its owner; the charm is too dependent on personality and atmosphere to be recaptured by even a verbatim report. It is one of the pangs of growing old that amongst our happiest memories are many we can neither communicate nor share; they rise before us as we dream over the fire, and we must dismiss them regretfully with a smile of recognition.

The pontifical talker—the man who tells you it is a fine day oracularly, as if he had found it out—was tolerated rather than esteemed, but he was much in evidence at formal parties where wits were expected to sparkle and watched each other like hostile terriers greedy for an opening but afraid to force one. The man who came prepared with three new phrases and a passable epigram was at a disadvantage: he wanted what is known on the stage as 'a feeder' to focus the attention of the audience upon him while he made his effect;

for if he flashed a brilliancy that passed unnoticed in the haze of general conversation, he usually wrapped himself up for the rest of the evening in an opaque and sulky gloom. But the Gargantuan talker bore down opposition ruthlessly by sheer weight of broadside. "We have had a good talk: I have said a number of remarkable things," rumbled a local celebrity after a two-hour monologue in the Johnsonian manner. Somebody ventured to observe that little had been heard from the guest of the evening. "And rightly so," retorted the dictator. "Is it not much better for him to acquire a stock of useful ideas than to listen to his own idle prattlings?" When a couple of these supermen came into opposition, the rest of the company perforce were silent. I have had the honour of completing a quartette, two of whom were noted in their own circles as powerful rather than fine talkers. Each avoided the elementary mistake of listening to what the other had to say before he contradicted it; if either paused, it was not to flatter his opponent with the weak hypocrisy of attention, but to collect his own resources for a further outburst. During the opening rounds, the third tried mildly to intervene, but he was hampered by being a gentleman: he could not shout down two babblers at once; so he soon left the combatants in uninterrupted possession of the ring. Yet they were not satisfied. The first to go told me on the doorstep, in allusion to his antagonist: "He thinks I know nothing, and I think he has a lot of wrong ideas about everything"; and as the second wormed into his overcoat, he observed:

" It is indeed a pathetic sight to see that fellow's rat-like brain struggling with a subject infinitely beyond its feeble capacity."

The racial Dublin style was less sententious: we had a fondness for the play upon words approaching perilously near the pun. Yet in the mouths of the best exponents this had a spontaneity and appropriateness that redeemed the credit of the class. A friend of mine was taking from dictation at the bedside of his father, then gravely ill, a letter to a clerical relative. The sick man, after an account of his own afflictions, had passed on to give some news of his younger son, Jack, last heard of in the middle of the fighting at the Dardanelles; and then he paused, wearied and run out of matter. " What shall I say next ? " asked the scribe.

" Oh . . . anything you like . . . something amusing. Give him a laugh to finish up with."

And my friend added, with the ink of the previous sentence still wet on the paper: " Jack and I would be glad of your prayers, for we are both in sore straits."

A more typical illustration needs a word or two of preface. One of the most popular solicitors in Dublin was a Mr Falls, generally referred to as ' Falls of the Boat Club ' to distinguish him from a namesake who had no turn for aquatics. With the Boat Club, indeed, he had identified himself, sparing neither time nor money to promote its interests; and on the day of the annual regatta he was naturally very much annoyed to be barred out because the policeman at the gate did not recognise him.

" My name is Falls," he said indignantly.

" I'm not denying it," said the policeman.

" But I'm *the* Falls—of the Boat Club," he protested.

" I don't care if ye're the Falls of Niagara, ye won't get past here without a ticket," was the unyielding answer.

I fear that our repartees had generally more of the bludgeon than the rapier about them. Before electric light was installed in the Bank of Ireland, the contractor sent a very dapper representative to get instructions where the lamps were to be placed. His immaculate turn-out aroused almost equal envy and hostility amongst the officials, who were far from measuring their importance by the size of their then uninflated salaries. " I suppose you'll want a lamp where that clerk is sitting ? " he asked the Secretary, who accompanied him round the building. " That clerk," forsooth ! The insulted one beckoned to the Secretary. " I'll need a light here, Mr Smith," said he. " Will you tell that plumber to make a note of it."

In the popular if schoolboyish art of ' scoring off ' people, the legal profession were supreme, and amongst them Mr ' Tim ' Healy took the foremost place. So many of his gibes have been printed that I hesitate to add to the list, but as no book about modern Ireland would be complete without one of them, I contribute my offering. In a case where he appeared, the son of the presiding judge was briefed by the opposite side and made an excellent speech which was listened to with evident complacency by his proud father. Healy had

barely indicated his first point in reply when the judge interrupted: "I don't agree with you. I can't see that at all."

"I'm not surprised, m'lud," replied Healy. "You have the son still in your eyes."

O'Shaughnessy (subsequently the Recorder of Dublin) once delivered a similar counter-attack on Judge Gibson, whose elevation to the Bench was charitably attributed to family influence. A witness with a seamy record and a face to correspond had answered to the name of O'Shaughnessy as his current *alias*; and when he left the box after a blighting cross-examination, the Judge leaned over and whispered sweetly but very audibly: "Any relation of yours?"

"No, m'lud," snapped O'Shaughnessy.

"Ah—I thought he might be a brother," said Gibson.

"If I had a brother, I'd have been a judge by now," said the future Recorder.

These little animosities between Bench and Bar were a traditional part of Irish legal life. Faulkiner, O'Shaughnessy's predecessor in the Recordership, carried on a delicious feud with Judge Morris, from whom he received an oblique snub during a trial at Monaghan. Faulkiner strove to make up for a poor case by a ranting speech and much gesticulation and thumping of the table; and when he sat down after a peroration full of sound and fury, a storm of applause broke out in Court. Morris sternly commanded silence and ordered one of the noise makers, a prosperous-looking farmer, to be placed under arrest. A stillness of trepidation

followed, while the judge eyed his victim with tigerish menace. He usually affected a mellow brogue; but when he chose, he had rasping tones in his voice to drive home an incisive phrase; and this time he used them to the full on his climax. "I have singled you out, sir," he began, "as you seem to be a man of some position whose duty it is to set an example of decency and propriety to your neighbours; and I wish to impress upon you that you are not in a theatre, where you are allowed by custom to express your approbation or disapproval of the performers, so long as you do so moderately and without malice. You are not, I say, in a theatre: you are in one of Her Majesty's Courts of Justice; and you have committed contempt of that Court—gross contempt—which I can punish by a severe fine or a long term of imprisonment." He paused, while the poor farmer grew grey with terror. "But," Morris resumed, "as I believe you have been momentarily carried away by your feelings, and have not intentionally misconducted yourself, I shall deal leniently with you. . . . You may go, sir; but let this be a warning to you; and remember, whatever you may think to the contrary, the gentleman who has just sat down is *neither an acrobat nor a mountebank.*"

Morris had the reputation of holding eighteenth-century views on the unnatural habit of bathing, and this legend may have inspired a certain K.C. to make a pleasant remark. As the judge took his seat on the Bench after an interval, he bade the usher to open the windows, commenting: "There's

a positive stench in the Court." Thereupon the K.C. chirruped: "Quite so, m'lud; we noticed it even *before* your Lordship came in." On the other hand, this may merely have been one of the things we should have expressed otherwise. There is the same difficulty about classifying the reason given by a former Irish Lord Chancellor for disallowing a Rule granted in a lower Court. Probably what he intended to say was that the matter had been brought up at a moment when his learned brother was pressed by urgent business and had not time to consider its merits; but what he did say was: "This case was, I believe, brought before Judge X—— after lunch when he was not in a condition to appreciate what he was doing."

Irishmen not infrequently make that kind of blunder with the best intention; the error is of the tongue, not of the heart; we are led astray by the very desire to please which is at the basis of all tact. The pedestrian who asks the casual peasant on the Irish countryside how far it is to the nearest village and is told, "Augh, it's about four miles and a bit," would do well to double the estimate and perhaps add the number he first thought of, if he has any perverse fancy for exact truth. I remember getting a reply of that sort in Louth, and enquiring further if the miles were Irish or English. Obviously, my informant had never heard of the dull table-book distinction—or if it had been forced upon him at school, the robust health of the boyish mind had enabled him to throw it off without damage—but he recognised the psychological difference, for after an instant of

hesitation he answered with a grin: "Ay—Irish miles do be sthretchin' out in the middle."

The ambition to stand well in the opinion of other people is common to all mankind, but we have our own way of holding it. To an Englishman, 'other people' in this context may be a mere abstraction, his summary of the prejudices of his caste, his vague idea of what 'all right-thinking persons' will pronounce correct; and secure in the approval of this imaginary Court of Appeal, he can afford to disregard the real but (*ex hypothesi*) local minority that surrounds him. To the Irishman—at any rate, the Southern Irishman—'other people' means those with whom he is actually in contact; and his sensitiveness to the immediate present (the 'this-here-now' of the metaphysician) is a source of both weakness and strength. It inclines him to kindness and courtesy and cardinal acts of Mercy and Charity; it saves him from the spurious opinion which is created by deference to what Mrs Grundy is imagined to think and may inhibit a whole community with taboos that possibly none of its members actually respect; but it also makes him ready to sacrifice the true to the agreeable, to reckon the absent invariably in the wrong, and to swing from one extreme to the other on the breath of a hint that the first attitude is unpopular.

To take sides is natural, but I suppose only an Irishman could contrive to take both sides at once. It was at a hurley match that I saw this feat accomplished. Hurley is a very Celtic variety of hockey which is pursued with such conscientious application by not only the teams but the spec-

tators that, as I heard a man say as he limped from the stand after witnessing an uproarious match: "Ye wouldn't know whether ye were playin' or only lookin' on." A resident on the road to the favourite Dublin hurley field told me he had mentioned casually to a friend that the ambulance had passed his door three times on the previous day. "I wish I'd been there; it must have been a grand match" said his companion appreciatively. On the occasion I refer to, County Wexford was playing County Tipperary, and the game had been in progress for some minutes when a cheerful little man bustled through the turnstile and elbowed his way into the crowd about the place where I was standing. He asked anxiously whether there had been any score so far, and, being reassured, he settled down to enjoy the contest. Presently Wexford got a goal, and his cheer could be heard well across the field: "Up Wexford! That's the stuff to give 'em! Kape them on the run, Moriarty!" he shouted. Black scowls came from those around, who were mostly supporters of Tipperary, but they had not yet warmed up to sterner controversial methods, and as the little man subdued his excitement, the question of dealing with him was postponed until half-time or a suitable lull in the game. Shortly afterwards Tipperary scored in their turn and again he whooped: "Up Tipperary! Tear the bowels out of thim!"

"Hey, me fine buckho," said one of his neighbours. "Didn't I hear ye shoutin' for Wexford a while back?"

"Mebbe ye did," said the impartial partisan.

" Shure me father was born in Wexford an' me mother kem from Tipperary, an' I don't give a damn *which* wins."

" The willingness is all." In the Dublin of my nonage there was a deaf old jeweller, much given to hospitality, whose constant indiscretions were not only forgiven but seemed to be enjoyed. If he took a fancy to you (and his friendliness was catholic, though his creed was Protestant), you got *carte blanche* to come, any Sunday you liked, to the informal gatherings he held in the long room above his shop. If you could sing or play an instrument or tell a story well, there were always patient people in the company who were ready to hear you ; while if you could only listen intelligently, you got opportunities to display that accomplishment also, and were even more acceptable in a place where executants tended to outnumber audience. You found copious refreshment, stimulating men and women, and your host ambling about in skull-cap and slippers and putting his guests at their ease with utterances that ought apparently to have stirred up a dozen broils. " I don't think you've met So-and-so. Come here and I'll introduce you," he would say ; and as he led you towards his prey he would shout into your ear a confidence as audible as a cornet solo. " Keep off politics, or he'll bore you stiff—his brother is doing six months," or " The decentest fellow in the world—but a bloody Papist." His age, his infirmity, and his shining good-will made it impossible to resent these outrages ; even the sufferer did not put on the solemn expression with which men try to cloak

a *faux pas:* you could do nothing but laugh, and in that merry throng, one laugh more or less did not count. These scenes illustrated what Bagehot calls the advantages of keeping an atmosphere; not only did they not cause embarrassment or offence, but they were looked upon as a welcome part of the entertainment. It may have been a fearful joy, like a meeting of the Suicide Club, but the interest of the evening was undoubtedly heightened by the thought that your own turn might come next. Was it pure clumsiness on the part of the old man, or high diplomacy?

I retain the same doubt concerning another episode which occurred on one of the steamers plying between London and Dublin. It was the Captain's duty to organise concerts from such material as he could discover amongst the passengers; but the first night at sea found the potential talent "very backward in coming forward." A reckless display by an amateur on the ship's piano was followed by a depressing 'stage wait.' "Won't some other lady or gentlemen favour us with a song?" asked the Captain. Nobody stirred; the silence of the lonely ocean, intensified by the low thud of the propeller and the faint splash of the wave at the bow, made us feel chilly, self-conscious, and shy. "Surely somebody will oblige?" he pleaded. "Remember this concert is got up for your own amusement. . . . I can assure you it doesn't give *me* any pleasure." That scattered the constraint at once; it fetched the most timid out of their shells with the conviction that they could not look more foolish than

our good skipper did, and turned us all into a happy family prepared to enjoy anything for the rest of the trip. Had he tried that guileless enormity before ?

A medical man I knew in County Kildare told me two of his experiences that pointed to a distinction between the Irish way of saying the disagreeable, and the English. The husband of a woman he was attending was disturbed by the length of her illness and pressed him to fix a date for her complete recovery. As this could not be given, he asked : " D'ye think, docther, I ought to consult a really good docther ? " Feeling that he had not expressed himself in the most flattering manner, he did his best to put matters right, with the usual result : " Ye see, Docther, people do be talkin' . . ." At any rate, as my friend said, there was evident the wish to let him down lightly. His first professional engagement had been as assistant to a physician with a large colliery practice whose patients were not so keen to salve his pride. When they saw his youthful appearance, they announced plainly : " We don't want thaa, young mon ; we've paid for Dr 'Awkins and Dr 'Awkins we mean to 'ave." The Irishman was eager not to offend ; the Englishmen had no desire to offend, but they did not care whether they offended or not : they had simply bought an article and were determined to accept no substitutes. They were like the Belfast dockyard worker whom a policeman accused of loitering without intent. " Move on, now ; ye mustn't be shtandin' here shpittin' about," said the constable. " A wull

not," replied the labourer. "A'm stannin' on me constetutional reets."

That mouth-filling phrase evokes another memory; forgive the discursiveness of age while I put it down. At Fairyhouse Races, I saw a gigantic Sergeant of the R.I.C. expelling a tipster who worked his prophecies with a set of white mice that picked up numbered cards in a complicated wire cage. "G'lang now, or I'll be takin' off me hand-socks an' hittin' ye," said the Sergeant. The man apparently demurred, or did not move far enough from his original pitch, for almost immediately came a second order: "Get off the coorse I'm tellin' ye—an' take yer unhumanitarian apparaytus wid ye."

As between the two racial sections of Ireland there is no doubt that for courtesy of speech the Southerns bear away the palm. The Northener not only does not practice it himself but he is inclined to resent it if offered to him by others. A Corkman of my acquaintance had to go by rail to Portadown; and being one of Nature's fussers, he irritated the officials at every stopping place by darting his head out of the carriage window and clamouring: "Is this Portadown? Have I got to Portadown yet?" Each time he was told politely: "No, sir—it's five stations farther on," or whatever the case might be, until as the train slowed down into a junction he asked the first porter he saw on the platform and got the response: "Can't ye read?" He knew, then, that he had reached his destination. Next morning he went for a stroll before breakfast, and coming

across an elderly man breaking stones by the wayside, he addressed him in the genial fashion of the South, where it is counted a breach of good manners to pass any one without a greeting.

"Good morra to ye—it's a fine day," said he.

The labourer selected another lump of granite and fell to work on it with the concentration of a man who feels himself spiritually alone in the Universe. The Corkman repeated his remark.

"What's that ye say?" demanded the toiler, looking up for the first time.

"I was only saying it's a fine day."

"An' who the Hahll's denyin' it? . . . The likes of you is enough to drive a man distracked."

To the native-born Dubliner, Hell was indeed a city very like Belfast. A Dublin child whose father was moving to the North ended her prayers on the evening before the exodus with the melancholy words: "and now, dear God, good-bye; we're going to Belfast to-morrow." I heard another criticism, equally unconscious and severe, from a little girl whose habit of staring one way and walking another produced frequent collisions with ordinary users of the pavement. "How is it," she said, "if I walk into people here, they say: 'Beg pardon, Missy,' but if I do it in Belfast, they say: 'Where the Devil are you going?'" Belfast regards Dublin as weak, treacherous, untruthful and effusive; Dublin reciprocates with charges of unscrupulousness and incivility. "When two Belfast men meet away from home," said a Southener to a Northener in my presence, "they glower at each other like a pair of cats; but if it's two

Corkmen—begob they're so glad that they fall on each other's necks."

"Ay—and feel for a half-Nelson," added the Northener.

In business the Northener drives a hard bargain; he summons all his acuteness to win every possible advantage; but once the bargain is made, it is kept. Up to that stage, the Dublin man is much more conciliatory; he is above sordid haggling for profit: he will "lave it to yerself, yer Honner." But when you think that everything is settled, you find he regards the agreement only as a basis for further discussion. Part of the hostility between the two places is admittedly due to religious and political divergence, but to my mind the economic factor is more potent still. What Dublin says of Belfast, Edinburgh says of Glasgow, Liverpool of Manchester, and Boston of New York. (You remember the American boy's reply to the question: "Who persecuted St Paul?" "Guess it must have been Minneapolis.") The older cities boast of their social, intellectual, and æsthetic eminence to make up for their commercial inferiority; they regard their rivals with the mingled fear, respect, and dislike which adept players at the game of life arouse in a less skilful adversary. The Southener admits the Northener's shrewdness, but conveys by some subtle inflexion that shrewdness is, after all, no great matter: he looks upon *savoir faire* as the crowning grace of life and nothing will persuade him that a Northener could be tactful—except in the sense in which I once saw the word used by a Belfast newspaper: "The police behaved with

great tact: they drew their batons and attacked the mob on the spot." Yet tact is a mighty lubricant of trade; and Belfast would hardly have prospered so well if she had not some drops of it in her composition. The Belfastman does not waste his energies on purely decorative speech. If he wants to know what price you pay for your collars (and he generally does) he is not too bashful to ask. If you offer to do him some slight service, he will not hesitate to enquire what you propose to make out of it for yourself. But with an object to play for, he can finesse as well as any one. A bright flower of Northern culture once explained to me how he had circumvented his first landlady when he was thrown unprotected on the savage world of London. In his maturity, as I knew him, his hobby was caution: he would not dream of engaging lodgings until he had put the proprietress through a drastic cross-examination on the service and cuisine, tested every spring in the bed and sofa, and moved all the chairs into the middle of the room to see if they would function without the support of the wall; so it seemed to me that it was not he, but London, that needed protection. From his own account, however, it appeared that he was only a callow lad of sixteen when he got a job in Lombard Street; and his parents, fearing that his faith and morals were not stout enough to repel, without assistance, the onslaughts of the wicked city, had more or less bound him for three months, without the option, to a landlady who made a speciality of being a second mother to miscellaneous youth, and advertised her estab-

lishment with the twin attractions of 'religious atmosphere' and 'gravel soil.'

"She was greatly taken up with religion—meaning no disrespect to her," said he, "and she had the walls of the room papered with texts to improve my mind and hide the cracks in the plaster. It was down in the basement, with a grand view of the opposite side of the area; and she must have taken the bed away from her youngest boy soon after he grew too big to fit it, for it was only about four feet long, and if I stretched my legs, they stuck through the end on to the washstand like a girder bridge, and all the cats of the terrace came and roosted on them. So I rolled myself up in a ball and pulled the quilt over my head, and—it's a fact I'm telling you—I could see the moon shining through it.

"'I hope you slept well,' said she when I came to breakfast.

"'Not so sound as I'd like, ma'am,' said I. 'To tell the truth, I kept dreaming I was at the North Pole.'

"'It's often like that in a strange bed,' said she; so I saw that was no use, and I tried another tack. 'That's a brave lot of texts you have hung up,' I said.

"'I'm glad you like them,' said she.

"'I did so,' said I. 'Only you haven't got my favourite, and I was thinking there's a great wee place over the bed that 'd suit it fine.'

"'What is it?' she asked, very interested.

"'"I was naked and ye clothed me,"' said I.

"'Oh!' said she.

"'Ay!' said I.

"'D'ye mean you'd like more blankets?' said she.

"'If you're sure you can spare them, ma'am,' said I. And I got them, too."

CHAPTER X.

THE RELIGIOUS BIAS.

"If there are two worlds at all (and that there are I have no doubt) it stands to reason that we ought to make the best of both of them, and more particularly of the one with which we are most immediately concerned."—SAMUEL BUTLER.

SOME years ago I happened to be lunching at a restaurant much frequented by the clergy while a Church provincial congress was in session. Just as one of my companions, a layman but openly addicted to good works, was telling me that he had attended the reception of the foreign delegates to the congress, a negro gentleman, wearing episcopal gaiters and coat, passed our table. "That's the Bishop of Kenya—I was introduced to him last night," said my colleague, bowing at the same time to the reverend visitor, who did not seem to notice the salute. "Looks more like the Bishop of Dinna Kenya," commented a profane fellow-luncher.

The equivoque comes back to me whenever I meet my own pastor—or, to speak more accurately, the pastor of the church I stay away from: he looks at me with a sort of puzzled antipathy, as if he were wondering who I am and why he dis-

likes me; from which the reader may perhaps infer that I am not the most suitable person to discuss religion in Ireland. Yet thrice in my life have I had ecclesiastical honours thrust upon me. Long, long ago, in my first office, a caller asked for "the tall man with the semi-clerical appearance" and I was found to answer his requirements. At a later date, when I dropped in to see a friend at a house into which he had recently moved, the maid informed his wife that there was "a new ministher downstairs." (The same servant, by the way, had the gift of tongues and did not hesitate to use it. She had been much annoyed by a succession of well-meaning intruders while there was sickness in the family, and the inopportune arrival of two more provoked her to flounce in to her mistress with the message, delivered in tones of concentrated venom: "There's another pair of snipe-nosed gazaybos in the dthrawin' room now. Am I to give *thim* tay, too?") Lastly, the girl who brought up my rationed meals during my convalescence in a Dublin nursing home used always to address me as "Father." Strange upon what a fine discrimination of words our happiness turns—for had she called me "Daddy," I should have felt that she was trifling with my grey hairs.

"Who d'ye think that is, Mary?" demanded a Dublin woman whose companion had just bowed to a passing cleric.

"Isn't he wan of thim new Redemptorist Fathers?" hazarded the other, her confidence shaken by the query.

" Musha, how could he be a Father ? Hasn't he two childther ? "

Being myself a parent, I must, under this ruling, disclaim the title of Father, and I have no better right to the other two tributes. My best, perhaps my only, qualification for my self-imposed task is that of the naval captain who wanted to be made an Irish Land Commissioner : it was objected plausibly against him that he knew nothing about land ; to which he retorted that therefore he would be sure to be impartial. But in Ireland neutrality itself is dangerous. The National Education Office held the balance between the parties even to the twentieth part of one poor scruple. They had a Catholic Secretary and a Protestant Secretary, a Catholic Chief Inspector and a Protestant Chief Inspector, a Catholic Examiner and a Protestant Examiner. British Civil Servants often wondered what were the exact attributes of the ' Protestant vacancy ' or the ' Catholic vacancy ' which they heard existed in the Department ; but the phrases had a precise meaning for those directly concerned. In at least one instance, however, the very care the Commissioners took to avoid offence gave offence. Amongst their Rules there was formerly to be found a peroration which, I doubt not, had stirred the ambition of many a pupil teacher to soar above the mean annual level of that station in life to which the Education Act had been pleased to call him : " An instructor of youth should be of sober mind and diligent habits, upright and earnest in all his dealings, and imbued with a spirit of loyalty to his country, his Sovereign and

his God. This is the kind of man the Commissioners are anxious to find, to encourage, and to reward." You will allow that this was a dignified and eloquent appeal; and when you seek for it now in vain, you will assume that the Commissioners found as many suitable instructors of youth as they were able to absorb, and are encouraging and rewarding them all over the country; but you will be wrong. What actually happened was that some furtive miscreant added the fatal anti-climax: "No minister of religion is eligible for this office," and thereby aroused a tornado of criticism that buried his name in infamy and swept the entire rule from the code.

"Heaven is a house," announced a small relative of my own, while we were engaged amicably together in building a sand castle. I accepted the information without comment, and the young lady added: "*You* won't go there." I agreed that it was an unlikely contingency, and we both dug at the moat for some minutes in silence. Then a small grubby paw stole into mine and a childish treble whispered at my ear: "I'd rather be with you, anyhow." Let me hope that there are others who will be with me also if I push ahead in the spirit of the advice given by Joseph Vance's father: "Be as unfair as you can at 'em all. Make 'em swear at you, one same as t'other. In six weeks they'll be saying, 'Give me Wance for an arbitrator.'"

Broadly speaking, the case against the religion of Ireland is that we are a nation of hypocrites: that we talk friendship while we feel enmity, that

we flatter to cheat and smile to betray, that we profess idealism and practice murder. The first obvious answer is that it is possible not to make a foolish hobgoblin of consistency without being a Pecksniff. For one reason, systematic hypocrisy is uncommonly hard work. "How good Walrond was!" exclaimed Professor Sellars to Matthew Arnold, who deprecated the invidious enthusiasm with: "Oh, we were all good at Rugby."

"Yes," admitted Sellars, "but *he* kept it up."

Such permanent excellence is not to be required of ordinary mortals: men have cut a tolerable figure in the world who failed to maintain a much lower standard. "George the Fourth could be a gentleman for five minutes, but he couldn't keep it up," said the Duke of Wellington, who could; and to a man once eminent in a very different sphere, Sir Henry Irving allotted a still smaller span. "Yes, Robson—er—Robson, a good actor but not great—no, not great—yes, yes, he was great. He was great enough to know that he could only be great for three minutes. The stuff they talk about his being able to play tragedy had he wanted to, is wrong. Three minutes of it, yes—but the whole evening! Oh dear no!" Luckily it is quite as difficult to be consistently bad as it is to be consistently good. Our feeling that Mr Pecksniff is far too delightful to be true is due less to the exaggeration of his hypocrisy than to its uniformity: he has a characteristic saying appropriate to every emergency; whether he is welcoming a guest, or presiding at a dinner party, or laying a foundation stone, or attending

a funeral, he is always ready with an unctuous selection of the remarks customary and proper on such occasions. Such bland certainty of touch would be beyond the range of any actual hypocrite. A poseur like Oscar Wilde must have suffered much from his admirers on this account. He could not afford to talk in a commonplace way for five minutes. He had to live up to his blue china in every word he uttered, and rack his brains to produce something splendidly exotic and poisonous when he would much rather have confined himself to easy banalities and "noises such as escape from a man when drinkin' hot coffee."

Complete and symmetrical hypocrites are, therefore, I believe, rare anywhere, but particularly in Ireland where we are constitutionally averse from taking trouble about anything. I have, however, met a few men who seemed to conform to the type. There was an Anglican layman who spoke to us feelingly about the sacrilege of taking Holy Communion after breakfast, and subsequently melted into the tropical glow of South America in company with two hundred and fifty pounds scraped together from the funds of our Young Men's Christian Association. There was the father of an acquaintance of mine who used to go laboriously over the second-hand novels he purchased for his family, erasing the 'damns' with a penknife, but whose own language when he was in liquor—and if he were not ecstatically drunk at least once a month, you felt that he was not really trying—was rich with the spoils of the barrack-yard and the race course. There was another (I shall

call him Morgan) who had prolonged spells of fervent piety that always ended in a headlong fall from grace. For, say, nine months of the year, he conducted himself with a decorum that would have sat well on a bishop; during the remaining three months, to call him a scoundrel would have been flattery, for the word implies a certain ability for evil, but if there was any sin not likely to bring him into immediate conflict with the police that he did not commit, it must have been because he had not heard of it. One, at least, of his outbursts culminated in a fit of genuine old-fashioned delirium tremens, as I happen to know, because I had to interview him on business during its progress; and I discovered how hard it is to chat in a debonair fashion of this and that, while your companion's glaring eyes are riveted through you on some non-existent object behind your back, or when he cuts off the discussion to exterminate a few green devils with the fire-irons. It was not at all funny.

The rector of Morgan's native parish in the country, who had not heard of his town-bred peculiarities, once commended to his fatherly care a youth appointed to the same office. The youth arrived at the dawn of a lucid interval and was introduced to the Bible Class then conducted by Morgan, who took the lad under his wing and grudged no expenditure of official time to warn him against evil companions and the dangers of great cities. So all went happily until Morgan began again to remember the names of Jameson and Dewar and Guinness. Over the incubation

period, when he had not more than two or three bottles of porter before attending the office, no change was noticeable in his demeanour, but when he reached the regular pint of whiskey before coming in, he grew perceptibly morose ; and it was then that the mild and heedless youth chose to walk into his room and ask him some question about the Bible Class. " Get to Hell out of this, ye snivelling young —— before I tear the——bowels out of ye," exploded Morgan.

On second thoughts, I must allow that Morgan was not a hypocrite : he was honestly repentant when he was not drunk and honestly drunk when he was not repentant. Better men often gave greater cause to doubt their candour. " Did ye ever notice," said a friend to me as we sat watching the bathers on the North Bull, years ago, " that the fellas who wear a double set of scapulars and cross themselves a dozen times before divin' into the wather, are always the first to shout : ' Holy Cripes, it's bloody awful could ! ' when they come up ? " Had I remembered the words of Dr Johnson, I should have quoted them : " Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles without having good practice ? " There is plenty of human nature in Ireland, especially of the kind that enables people to hold contradictory opinions by ignoring their incompatibility. In Dublin, amongst men of the sporting class, we had a species of inconsistency peculiar, I think, to ourselves. They were born of Catholic parents, and were baptised into the Church at the earliest

possible moment; they accepted its doctrines, or as many of them as they were told, with the unquestioning belief they yielded to the facts of Nature or a Railway Time Table; but they were not theologians and had never considered the implications of their creed, and they were too closely devoted to the abstruse technique of the Turf to have leisure for reading anything beyond the Sunday newspapers from which they imbibed the condensed milk of Manchester Agnostic socialism; so that with a little management and judicious opposition they could be lured into pounding the bar counter in support of opinions that would have made their pastors shudder between a prayer and an anathema.

No wonder the Censorship Act in the Irish Free State was preluded and forecasted by bonfires of objectionable Sunday papers seized by devout Catholic youths at suburban railway stations. Indeed I have always thought that it was rather the heresy than the obscenity of such prints that led to these modern *autos-de-fe*. Against immorality, the Church is always armed; but there is no certain antidote for the insidious poison of secularism, whose sophistries masquerade disconcertingly like Reason. As Cardinal Newman observes: "The multitude of men confuse together the probable, the possible, and the certain, and apply these terms to doctrines and statements almost at random. They have no clear view what it is they know, what they presume, what they suppose, and what they only assert." A divinity student who had been attending the lectures of Dr Bernard, then Professor of Theology in Trinity College, Dublin,

came to a friend of mine with a difficulty: "What's this Agnosticism stuff that Bernard is talking about?" he wanted to know. As the simplest way of showing him the full infamy of the sceptical attitude, my friend put into his hands 'An Agnostic's Apology' open at the place where Leslie Stephen sets out the slender grounds on which Faith yields an inward assent to the story of the Magi. "Now that's sense—I understand that," exclaimed the student joyfully after he had read the specious passage; and my friend had the sad task of explaining to him that, from his professional point of view, it ought not to make sense.

Naturally the uneducated paid still less heed to the logic of their convictions. My mother had a servant who left us on her marriage to live in a block of artisans' dwellings. In the course of a subsequent friendly visit she repeated to us, verbatim, a long tirade of abuse that had been showered on her innocent head by the tenant of an adjoining flat. My mother asked her what she had retorted to all this, and she replied: "Divil the ha'porth, ma'am. I knew all *she* had to say, but she didn't know all *I* had to say; and I just toult her I'd lave her to God. . . . And mark my words—three days aftherwards she came rampagin' home wid a bellyful of could porther sourin' on her, and she fell down the steps and bruk both her ankles . . . and the neighbours said I oughtn't to have left her to God."

I can parallel this with an incident from the Protestant side. A farmer in Tyrone was awakened one stormy night by ominous creakings from his

cowshed, and on going out he discovered that the iron roof was beginning to work loose in the gale. He climbed up a ladder and began to fasten the threatened portion with a rope lashing. His wife, who had followed him, grew alarmed and implored him to get down from his dangerous position. "Ah come on in to yer bed and lave it to God, Andy!" she shouted. "Quet yer yammerin', woman," grunted her husband. "Is it lave me good roof to the fella that's tryin' to take it off me?"

We have a modest habit of referring to Ireland as "The Island of Saints," but if the remark has any modern meaning, I can only suppose that the standard of sanctity assumed is about that of the proud mother in Ringsend who assured the parish priest that her young Mary Ellen was going to be a Saint. "Ye'd be watchin' her playin' round wid the other childher, and ye'd hardly hear more than wan curse out of her in an hour." A slightly different criterion was accepted by the Ulster boss of a mixed gang of labourers. In referring to four Italians who were unable to shift a balk of timber which two Irishmen lifted with ease, he said in the tones of one striving to keep the world safe from democracy: "An' them's the fellas they makes Popes of!"

A neutral observer would not, perhaps, see much reason to challenge Swift's verdict: "We have enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another." We use religion to fan the embers of political animosity, and politics to work off grudges bred by religious difference. People, like Cromwell, who were

objectionable on both grounds have their memory kept as unflatteringly green as Judas Iscariot's. An Irishwoman who paid her first visit to London at the age of seventy, came to a halt, with arms akimbo, opposite the Protector's statue in Westminster, and glared at it as if she were identifying the corpse of a personal enemy. "Ah-ha, Crummle, where arre ye now?" she gloated, knowing that the question admitted of but one answer. . . . Yet the most truculent Sinn Feiner I knew used to growl: "I'm a descendant of the Cromwellian settlers—and proud of it!"

In Ireland, as elsewhere, there was a small minority, the salt of the earth, who practised in every deed and thought the Christianity they professed. There was an even smaller minority, which included some excellent friends of mine, men much better than myself, who admitted no recognised creed. In the Irish census for 1911 there can be found the entry: "Canopian . . . I." I knew him, and a very good fellow he was; but until I heard how he had filled in his census paper, I was not aware that he had any religious opinions at all; so I drew him aside and asked him what were the distinctive tenets of his faith. "My church," he replied, "is the broad canopy of Heaven . . . I don't want to hear about the immortality of the Presbyterian soul in a room full of the smell of piety and hot oil stove . . . I let the missus go there whenever she has a new hat—or thinks some other woman has one." The bulk of the population, however, assented to a creed and attended church or chapel with some

regularity, but did not convey the idea that they were profoundly spiritually-minded. They viewed Religion as something correct rather than something vital—except for death beds, or the lower classes. "You ought always to go to church on Sunday morning," advised a Laodicean of this sort. "Apart from other considerations, it shows that you were able to get up at a decent hour and wash and shave without cutting yourself; and these are all respectable things. But never have anything to do with a church choir or a bazaar, for they are the abodes of hatred, malice, envy and all uncharitableness. I've known bosom friends who had been looking for years for chances to die for each other; and ten days after they joined a church choir each of them was blackguarding his pal about town as the worst in the world."

I heard an even better expression of this point of view at the departure of the Glasgow steamer from the North Wall. A lowing herd of cattle had been wound slowly o'er the lea into the hold, the last crate of cabbage had been dropped on the greasy deck, and a couple of sailors were hauling in the gangway, when I noticed on the jetty a stout little man bidding farewell to a youth who leaned forlornly over the bulwarks. "Goodbye, Jack me boy," said he. "Remember what your mother told you. You're going out into the great world . . . the great world. . . ." He hiccoughed and swayed, but steadied himself with one arm round a bollard and mopped his brow with a handkerchief that had been used before. Evidently

he had lost the thread of the discourse that he felt was expected of him as a parent at a leave-taking. A barefoot urchin with adenoids and a defective ear started to sing 'Come Back to Erin' in the hope of blackmailing a few halfpence out of the homeward-bound tourists, and this seemed to give him the required clue. "Ye're goin' out into the great world, where ye haven't yer father to be comin' back to, if ye got into throuble and . . . and . . . No thricks, now I'm tellin' ye," he concluded lamely, the inspiration having again run dry.

"No, dad," said the miserable boy, and a silence fell about them. The propeller began to revolve, swirls of tarry mud rose in the widening gap between the boat and the quay, and as Dublin faded backwards into the fog and drizzle, I caught the final exhortation: "An' whatever ye do, Jack me boy . . . mind yer bloody religion."

In general, if a Protestant attended Divine Service oftener than twice in the month, he was likely to be an office-bearer of the church, a Trustee or a Sidesman, and he probably did good, from time to time, to those who could stand it. The corresponding male Catholic made five or six confessions every year, took an active interest in some clerical organisation, and spent a couple of hours each week in charitable activities under the ægis of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Below him came the man who, although he was usually at Mass on Sunday was careful to select 'short Twelve' for his devotions, and disliked fish and confession strongly enough to avoid both as much as he could, consistently with remaining inside the pale

at all. His favourite quotation was Sir Dominick Corrigan's apothegm: "Never trust a man that goes to Mass of a week day." Before Easter, when confession was obligatory, he might be seen enquiring of his more regular friends for 'an easy man'—*i.e.*, a priest who could be trusted to give him absolution with the minimum of homily and penance. On the lowest level there were some, known in the vernacular as 'hard chaws,' to whom Easter meant little but three days' holiday, and Fairyhouse Races. (Memory flashes back to Kilmessan Episcopal Church, hard by Fairyhouse Racecourse, where on Easter Sunday the congregation would scarcely have settled down for the sermon when a whisper would be shot from the pew behind: "Have ye anything good for the Farmers' Plate?" No sect has a monopoly of irreverence.) "Why is Easter?" asks Danny McCree in one of O. Henry's stories. "I know it comes the first time you're full after the moon rises on the 17th of March—but why? Is it a proper and religious ceremony, or does the Governor appoint it out of politics?" Although no Catholic in Ireland was quite so ignorant as that, a very few acted as if they were. I was told of one of these that being awakened to a sense of his sinful neglect by a sharp bout of sickness, he presented himself at the confessional and was asked the routine question: "When were you at Confession last?"

"About twenty years ago, Father," he replied.

"Twenty years!" gasped the priest. "Twen-ty years!" He stepped out into the body of the chapel, and addressed the waiting crowd, "Ye

can all go home; I'm engaged for the evening."

I heard of another neglectful son of the church who was at length persuaded by his wife to conform to its ordinances; and a companion was deputed to see that he did not escape till he had been handed over to a confessor in the chapel attached to the Dublin residence of the Carmelite Order. There were several others in need of spiritual relief ahead of him, and when his turn came he had hardly struck into the full current of his narrative when six o'clock sounded from the turret bell. The rules of the Order were very strict; tea was placed on the table at six o'clock, and any Father who was five minutes late got no further chance of having food that night: so the priest told the penitent to wait, and hurried from the chapel. Ten minutes passed and the penitent grew uneasy: another ten dragged by, and still there was no sign of a return; and then his sinister suspicions grew too much for him, and he slipped out to join his friend. "Come out of this, quick, Tim!" he implored. "He must have gone for the polis."

I remember a curious incident connected with the same Carmelite Chapel. Two young ladies, who were saying their prayers at the altar, thought they heard sounds of movement inside a coffin lying in the adjoining mortuary chapel. Naturally they were very frightened; other worshippers caught the infection and insisted that they also had heard noises; and eventually the coffin had to be opened, when the body enclosed was found to be unquestionably dead and undisturbed. A

Dublin newspaper published a full account next morning, but printed directly under it a report of a law case with an unfortunate but congruous heading: "Release of Spirits from Bond."

That reminds me of two other cases in which Dublin newspapers were not lucky in their references to death. Clontarf, I should mention, is a seaside suburb of Dublin with, in my youth, a malodorous beach that was known alternatively as 'The Sloblands' or 'Ashpit Park'; so that an obituary ending: "Funeral to-morrow for Clontarf. 'We shall meet on that beautiful shore'" attracted attention of a kind that its authors could hardly have wished. But it must have been the type-setter who was responsible for the most disastrous death notice I ever read:—

"Died, on the 30th ult. at his residence —— Avenue, Dublin, A—— B——. Deeply regretted by his sorrowing wife and family.

"Pupil of C——'s Dancing Academy. Terms moderate. Prospectus free.

"Sacred Heart, have mercy upon him."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RELIGIOUS BIAS (*continued*).

"No one can be an unbeliever nowadays. The Christian apologists have left one nothing to disbelieve."—H. H. MUNRO.

"His only religion was the Bible which he never read, and the Wesleyan Church which he rarely attended."—SINCLAIR LEWIS.

WHAT is the exact mental attitude of the uneducated Irish Catholic towards the Saints whom he particularly venerates? Forty years' acquaintanceship with the conditions of that problem has not enabled me to solve it. I understand, or think I understand, the teaching of the Church on the point, but the thoughts of casuists are not the ideas of the mob. Father Macdonald, a professor of theology in Maynooth, mentions in his recollections that when he had expounded a Catholic doctrine to the Presbyterian engineer of the boat on which he was travelling, the engineer said to him: "I suppose that must be the view of your Church, since you tell me it is. But do all your people hold it?" To which Father Macdonald, after some consideration replied: "I must warn you candidly that many of our people do not so

understand it. I am afraid that many priests would deny it. . . . But it is God's truth." If there is this difficulty in reaching a consensus of opinion amongst the experts, how can we hope to fathom the mind of the multitude? Some of the cults were explicable enough: the Saints round whom they clustered were reported to have special sympathy in certain directions. St Anthony, for example, was supposed to be particularly tender towards women in childbirth, and his name was often invoked at the Rotunda and Coombe Maternity Hospitals. A patient in the first of these once called over the day nurse and asked her whether the woman in the next bed had been safely delivered. The nurse nodded assent, and the patient went on: "Ah the poor craychure. . . . It was terrible the pains she had last night. Every time she gev a groan I'd be prayin' 'Holy St Anthony help her. . . . Holy St Anthony help her!'"

"Hush!" interrupted the nurse, with a warning finger to her lip. "She might hear you. . . . She's a Protestant."

"Augh, why didn't you tell me that yesterday?" grumbled the patient. "Keepin' me awake half the night wastin' me time on a heretic!"

But the sudden popularity—not to speak it profanely—of purely miscellaneous Saints was not so easily accounted for. I remember, for instance, how, during my 'teens, "The Little Flower of Jesus," a previously unknown child Saint, became the object, amongst Roman Catholic girls, of a devotion as immediate and fervent as Rudolf

Valentino achieved at a later date amongst their more worldly sisters of all denominations. I hope it will not be offensive to my many good Catholic friends if I say that these cults appeared to have latent within them the notion of ' influence ' which is so agreeable to the Irish mind—the idea that the Almighty allowed the Saint then in vogue more frequent access than any of his peers, and paid greater heed to his petitions. Otherwise, to a pagan mind like mine, it would seem less expedient to call upon a celebrated Saint already overburdened with supplications than upon one forgotten by the world, who might reasonably be presumed to be gratified by the pious attention and have more leisure to devote to the interests of his client. A Catholic once repeated to me a conversation overheard by his brother, a Dublin priest, which illustrates the bias I have in view ; and I leave the reader to draw whatever inferences he chooses, always excluding that of profanity in the intentional sense : for the speakers merely used idioms that they heard every day of their lives, without thought of the literal meaning a stranger might attach to their words. The priest was engaged in one of the side rooms leading into his church, and he could hear a group of women discussing the various images and pictures of the Saints with which the place was decorated.

" I do like that St Catherine ; she's cruel bewtiful," said one voice.

" Well, d'ye know, I'd rather have St Teresa ; she's a swayter face, if ye know what I mane," said another.

" The Little Flower is the wan for me," said a third. " I think she'd *do* more for ye, like."

" I've been a client of the Blessed Vargin now, goin' on for forty years, an' I'm not goin' to desart her ; she's got a great ear of God," deposed a fourth.

" Ah, g'wan out of that ! " broke in a final voice, huskified by innumerable whiskies and bawling vegetables for sale in the public streets. " Shure the Sacred Heart 'd knock Hell out of the bloody lot of thim ! "

" The experience of many ages proves," says Macaulay, " that men may be ready to fight to the death for a religion whose creed they do not understand and whose precepts they habitually disobey." When, as often happens in Ireland, religion becomes a political slogan, there are always to be found on both sides, staunch partisans who were never conscious of spiritual uplift until their souls stirred within them in assent or defiance at the battle cry: "To Hell with the Pope." " Dublin," said a cynic, " is full of fanatic Catholics—men that 'd miss Mass for the sake of a religious argument." Every one knows the story of the Armagh man whom a friend was trying to convert to a more tolerant frame of mind by reciting incidents of the then Pontiff's kindliness and charity. " Yon is all varra weel," was the comment. " The Pope may be a guid wee mon for all I know . . . but he's got a dom bad name in Portydown." A less familiar illustration, perhaps, is that told to me originally of The MacDermott, a former leader of the Irish Bar, when he temporarily deserted the

Munster circuit, and went 'special' on a law suit to the North. I have heard the story related since of other men; and long experience of Ireland has cultivated my naturally strong powers of scepticism until I go about the world disbelieving things automatically; and I begin to suspect that this particular anecdote owes more to Art than accident; but it is true in the spirit if not in the letter, and I shall put it down as it reached me. The case in which The MacDermott was retained dragged out longer than he expected, and he was compelled to spend the week-end in the county town. On Sunday morning, therefore, he sallied out of his hotel to go to Mass and stopped the first citizen he saw to ask where the church was.

The man eyes him severely from his spotless spats to his immaculate top-hat, and said: "I suppose it's the 'Piscopalian Church the likes of you'll be wantin'. It's up on yon hill."

"No, no," protested The MacDermott. "It's the Chapel I want." (Chapel in the south of Ireland is synonymous with Roman Catholic Church.)

"Oh—it's the Mathodist Meetin' House you're lookin' for. . . . It's down by the river."

The MacDermott, a little embarrassed by these misunderstandings, explained that he was not a Methodist, and the man's face immediately brightened. "Why didn't you say so at first, mon? Sure, there's Number One opposite, and Number Two is right by the bridge—you couldn't miss it—and Number Three . . ."

"No, no, my good fellow," broke in The MacDermott, who did not know that these mysterious

figures referred to Presbyterian congregations, but was satisfied that they could have no connection with his own faith. "Where do the Catholics go?"

"The Cawthlics? . . . The Cawthlics?" echoed the man in puzzled tones. "Is it the Papishes you mean?" And on receiving a blushing nod of assent, he went on, amazed that any one of apparent means and education could ask so foolish a question. "Where do the Papishes go? To Hahll, mon. . . . Where else?"

Walter Bagehot remarks that when an Englishman sees something in religion that he does not like, he imputes it, *prima facie*, to the Pope. If you leave out the words 'in religion,' the observation held nearly true of the Orangeman of the type just illustrated. His belief in the constant and vindictive attention of the Holy Roman Empire to every detail of Irish affairs was so wholehearted as sometimes to be comic—I use the past tense, because bigotry pushed to that degree of stupidity has grown rare enough to look ridiculous even to bigots. It was said in Belfast that once when a Catholic football team defeated their chief Protestant opponents, two supporters of the beaten side walked home together in a funereal silence, dazed with the greatness of the tragedy. At length, as they parted to hide their grief in decent privacy, one said to the other in a voice choked with unuttered sobs, "Andy, lad, there'll be quare oul' rejoicin' at the Vatican the night." Here again, the story may have been composed rather than have happened; here again it is typically

true if not individually so: it conveys the subconscious thought of those who were in the habit of describing themselves as 'good Protestants.'

The last phrase, by the way, gave much annoyance to Mr G. K. Chesterton when he visited Ireland. Now a man's opinion on the Irish question (whatever that may be) will receive greater consideration if he has seen Ireland than if he has not; but the value of such contact depends a great deal upon his having what Bagehot calls "an experiencing mind;" otherwise, reality presses upon him in vain. Mr Chesterton saw a number of things through his own brilliant but astigmatic medium, guessed others, and reasoned upon the product in exactly the same way as if he had never ceased to gravitate between Buckinghamshire and the Strand. Besides, it may be doubted whether a stay of a fortnight or so in a country, at a highly inflamed period of its history, qualifies even the most astute observer to interpret its idiom and pronounce judgment upon its character and destiny. On the minor detail I have just mentioned, he observes: "The Protestant generally says 'I am a good Protestant' while the Catholic always says 'I am a bad Catholic'"; and the first comment I have to make is, that the assertion is absolutely untrue. I have a pleasant memory of an old and loved servant of my mother exclaiming, as she withdrew her finger hurriedly from a basin of boiling water: "Gorraheney! That's hot enough to scald a Prodestan, let alone a good Catholic like me." And I have heard the phrase falling from the lips of other good Catholics. But not

content with stating as a fact what is not a fact, Mr Chesterton argues upon it that the use of the word ' good ' in that context implies a consciousness of moral superiority. " The point is here," he writes, " that the evil in the delusion does not consist in bigotry but in vanity. It is not that such a Belfast man thinks he is right; for any honest man has a right to think he is right. It is that he does think he is good." In truth, the Belfast man uttering the phrase does not think anything of the kind; he is priding himself, rightly or wrongly, not on his virtue but on his consistency or perhaps his stubbornness. If Mr Chesterton had paused to remember Dr Johnson's affection for ' a good hater,' he might have forborne to give a theological meaning to an expression purely intensive. Or then, again, he mightn't . . .

There is, however, in the North of Ireland, a shade of meaning occasionally attached to the word Protestant which a Catholic could justly regard as offensive, but it is generally applied to classes, not individuals. A single example will suffice. A Protestant contractor was employed to carry out some repairs to a Catholic Church under the direction of a Catholic architect. " That's a good job," said the architect, as he examined the completed work. " Yes " agreed the contractor in all innocence. " It has a more Protestant look on it now." He had no intention of hurting any one's feelings; nor, indeed, did he, for the architect who told me the story, enjoyed it hugely; but the idea underlying the words was clearly that Protestantism being the best of all things, any im-

provement must necessarily bear a Protestant appearance.

Neither Protestant nor Catholic fails to recognise the bigotry of the other side, or to point it out when opportunity arises; and since we find what we look for, it is sometimes pointed out when the opportunity has not arisen. There was a rule in the Belfast trams that nurses in uniform were carried free. A colleague of mine once was sitting behind two girls who, from their talk, were evidently nurses, though they were in mufti. Presently the conductor came along for the fares, and the girls said they came from the Mater Hospital. The conductor reminded them that they were not in uniform, and therefore must pay, which, after considerable demur, they did; and then one turned to the other: "D'ye know what it is? It's nothing but pure bigotry."

To the same colleague I owe another illustration of what might be called tolerant intolerance. A Protestant farmer who met with an accident on a trip to Dublin was taken to Jervis Street Hospital. When he returned home, he told his horrified neighbours that the nurse, who prepared the poultices for his leg, used to make the sign of the cross on them with the spoon; and then candour impelled him to a strange admission. "Upon me word," said he, "I don't think it did me any harm."

There was a Protestant clergyman in the South of Ireland so Puritanic in his views that it was said he refused to let the new church be built at the cross roads because of the hint of Romanism.

That, I have no doubt, is apocryphal ; but although he was liked personally, his outspoken opinions produced a corresponding reaction on the other side ; and when Dail Eireann was legally established as a going concern, a Catholic old lady in the town said to her parish priest : " I thought you toult me we'd all be free when we got a Parlyment of our own—and there's the Prodestan' minister goin' round loose the same as ever ! "

Since I have related so many Protestant myths, it is only just that I should quote a Catholic one which used to be much savoured in Dublin. An English Liberal came to Belfast with letters of introduction to leaders of the Catholic party, from whom he heard many instances of Ulster bigotry. In the smoke room of his hotel he fell into conversation with a stranger, to whom he passed on his latest tit-bit of sectarian scandal. " I learn on good authority, sir," he said, " that on the whole staff of the Belfast Corporation, employing hundreds of clerks, there are just three Catholics. Isn't that a disgraceful state of things ? "

" It is, indeed, sir," agreed the stranger. " And all I can say in our defence is that though I'm a member of the Corporation myself, I never heard about it until this moment. I'll go straight down to the City Hall and have them sacked at once."

So far, I have spoken of Protestants as if they formed one homogeneous body, as indeed they always did in face of the Catholic opposition. The *via media* of High Church Anglicanism was practically unknown in Ireland, save for such sporadic outbursts as occurred at St John's, Sandymount,

when the rector introduced a ritual more ornate than his congregation approved. Then for a while the church was packed every Sunday with sight-seers attracted by the prospect of a row. "You could fill any church in Dublin if you had a dog fight after the anthem," observed a disgusted parishioner. But generally speaking, any Irishman that was not with the Roman Catholic Church was enthusiastically against her. The Quakers occupied an unique position in Catholic opinion. They were insignificant in number, but they had won an enviable reputation for benevolence and honesty and freedom from sectarian bitterness. "Nine times out of ten, if a man talks religion to you, button up your pockets, because it's your money he's after," advised a shopkeeper I knew. "But I'd let a Quaker have anything in my place on the nod, if he wanted it." Possibly had there been more of them, they would have been less respected, for their political weakness made for tolerance, and they could hardly have multiplied to any great extent without lowering, in some degree, their average of character. This was certainly a case where the individuals bestowed grace on the church.

Beyond the Quakers, the normal Catholic was vigilantly aware of Episcopalians (*i.e.*, members of the disestablished Church of Ireland), Presbyterians, Methodists, and possibly Baptists: these he recognised as professing religions, albeit wrong ones. The smaller dissenting bodies, such as the Plymouth Brethren, the Unitarians, and the Salvation Army hardly came within his ken. I re-

member sitting on the slope of Great Orme's Head one Sunday morning with a Catholic friend who listened with much curiosity to a service that was being held in the Happy Valley below. "I think that must be some kind of a religion," he announced finally, with the air of a naturalist classifying an uncatalogued beetle. I ought not to smile at his caution in making his diagnosis, for I once nearly came to a wrong conclusion on similar premises. In the open space before the Chester Town Hall, I saw a Man in Black addressing a small knot of listeners; his voice and manner were so heartfelt and persuasive that I was convinced he was preaching a sermon until I caught the last words of his peroration. "You are proud, gentlemen," said he, "—and justly proud—of your wonderful old City, your ancient Cathedral, your celebrated Walls. But in the shadow of that Cathedral—yes, within those very walls that travellers come thousands of miles to wonder at—I have seen little children in the worst extremity of degradation and disease. Don't blame your God for it, gentlemen. . . . Don't blame your God! . . . Blame yourselves . . . when you have within your reach this perfectly simple remedy, which I am prepared to offer you in boxes at sixpence each, or a shilling for the triple size."

Though the Dissenting communities presented a united front against any one who tried to bring them a day's march nearer Rome, they did not overlook their differences when they were by themselves. Sometimes they treated these with the exaggeration of a family joke. "Is there any

question of religion here?" asked a judge, who was presiding over an action about the custody of a child. "No, m'lud; there's no religion at all in the case," said the Methodist barrister. "Both parties are Presbyterians." Sometimes, however, the distinction was taken much more seriously. For example:—

An Armagh Presbyterian of the old school fought a long and losing fight against the introduction of a harmonium into his local church—not, I should mention, on grounds of music or æsthetics, but of orthodoxy. With the passing of years, the younger members of the congregation, who were dissatisfied with the efforts of the precentor, increased in number and influence, while the more conservative elders came to form a majority in the churchyard rather than in the vestry; until at last youth carried the day and the harmonium was installed.

The first Sunday on which it was to be used, the old gentleman arrived about half an hour before the service and seated his fifteen stone of unbending Calvinism on the lid of the instrument; and since nobody was ready to risk an unseemly disturbance by attempting to remove him, there he remained until the benediction was pronounced.

Measures were taken to prevent a repetition of this *coup d'état*, but they were not needed: the passive resister had registered his formal protest, and he withdrew from the church, vowing solemnly and publicly never to enter it again. A month or so later, a neighbour encountered him on the way home from market, and observed:

" A see ye're no gaen' to the Kirk, these days, Davit."

" A'm not. A've shakken the dust off ma feet agen them, an' A'll never darrken the door till the day A dee."

" And why not, Davit ? "

" A can't thole yon harmonium."

" But A see ye goin' to the Mathodists—an' they've got an Orrgan, too."

" Ay—A dinna mind an orrgan in a Mathodist Meetin'—but it's an awful sicht in the Hoose of God ! "

When I heard that a fairly well-known Plymouth Brother had been ostracised by several Irish branches of the Brethren because he had been " seen coming out of a place," my evil imagination suggested that the place must have been a public-house, a racecourse, a music-hall, or perhaps worse ; but I was wrong : it was a gathering of the ' exclusive ' Brethren, who apparently not only exclude, but are excluded by, their more comprehensive comrades. Subsequently, another brother was called to account for associating with the sinner—or more accurately, for allowing his name to be advertised as a speaker with him at a neutral assembly. He pleaded that when he accepted the invitation he did not know that he would be so yoked with a pariah ; but the matter could be easily arranged : he was to preach in the evening, the other in the afternoon ; and by not attending the early session he would avoid giving any cause of offence. So said, so done ; and when he delivered his address, his topic was the necessity of brotherly

love amongst all those who acknowledged the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But when all is said and done, sectarian hatred has been more talked about than practised. Incidents such as these attract notice out of proportion to their importance; and the same remark is true about the outbreaks of ill-feeling that occur spasmodically between Protestants and Catholics. In the Dublin I knew, men were judged for the most part on their merits, not on their creed. I have been a solitary Protestant in a class of Catholics; I have worked with them, played with them, fought, disputed, and laughed with them, and I was never made to feel an Ishmael. Nor is either side blind to its own defects. If the worst I know about Protestantism I have seen amongst Protestants, the worst I know about Catholicism I have heard from Catholics; and I have not recorded either, because the worst is not characteristic. Two books published during my life have fallen into the mistake of treating the dark aspect of a faith as being the important aspect: 'Father Ralph' by Gerald O'Donovan, and 'Illumination' by Harold Frederic. Both writers had insight into character and power to depict it, and both evidently had inside knowledge of their subject; yet the pictures they have drawn are untrue. The first magnifies the evils of Irish Catholicism with an occasional glimpse of its merits, the second brings out the baseness of American Methodism with even less admission of its strength. In each case, all the incidents might have happened; possibly the author could have produced evidence that they

did happen ; but they could not all have happened within the time and place covered by the story. You can draw up a formidable indictment against any body of human beings if you heap together the errors and crimes of a country for a generation, and represent them as occurring in a parish during a year ; but you prove nothing except that, as the Americans say, people are only folks after all : and this is a truth that Irishmen's talent for creating and perceiving incongruity makes them ready to admit without strict demonstration. Let me wind up with one more story of the critical eye directed on the activities of its own party ; and please bear in mind that it is a story about Catholics told to me by a Catholic eyewitness. He was spending his vacation in a country farm house, and one evening after supper, when the inmates and guests were gathered round the kitchen fire, a young neighbour began to recount his adventures with a hurley team which had lately visited Dublin. They had, he said, combined patriotism and piety with their sport, for after the match they had all gone up to Glasnevin cemetery and said a Rosary at the grave of Thomas Ashe, one of the earliest hunger-striking martyrs. The young man's uncle, who was sitting by the fireside, listened without comment while the tale was in progress ; but when it was over and the company duly impressed, he opened fire :

" Shawn—how long ago is it your poor mother died ? "

" It's goin' on for five years, uncle."

" She's buried in Mulruddery, isn't she ? "

"She is so—God rest her soul."

"D'ye ever be passin' that way nowadays?"

"Shure I pass it every market-day reg'lar, uncle."

"Shawn—how long is it since ye said a Rosary at your mother's grave?"

And no more was heard of the piety of hurley teams for that evening.

CHAPTER XII.

A CATHOLIC AND A PROTESTANT.

"Sure it pays to be good—but not much."—*Broadway.*

SOME of the few friends whom the serial publication of these recollections has left me, have taken me to task for not presenting my countrymen in a more admirable light. It appears that I have been filling the public mind with the idea that the population of Ireland consists exclusively of idlers, gamblers, drunkards, liars, swindlers and criminal lunatics.

If I have created that impression, I am very sorry; for, plausible as it may seem, it is not strictly accurate. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of the Irish men and women I have known were as sober, honest, and industrious as the subject of a testimonial is always alleged to be. My difficulty is that in ordinary life there is little room for the romantic virtues, and the homely merits do not make exciting reading: as Mr Dooley says, "There's no news in being good." I could not hold an audience spellbound while I related how a junior clerk created a world's record

by indexing three hundred and eighty-seven files in five hours, or how one of his efficient seniors successfully reorganised a Department back to its original condition in four moves within a twelve-month: these triumphs are too technical for general appreciation. Still, as I have written so much about my less edifying acquaintances I may be permitted, in the interests of artistic balance, to devote a few lines to the best man I ever knew —Thomas Gavin, a Civil Servant, a Roman Catholic, and an Irishman.

Every one who came in contact with him had the same report: that he had spent his life, consistently and unobtrusively, in the service of others. His sole personal luxuries were cheap tobacco, a cherrywood pipe, and a book from the public library; he grudged himself fire and clothes that the hungry might be fed and the poor clad. Once some relatives conspired to substitute a new overcoat for the one he had worn threadbare. He accepted the gift with evident pleasure in the affection that prompted it; but after a few weeks he was detected stealing out of his house in the old coat, while its rival adorned a ragged protégé. No one except himself could say to how many derelict orphans he acted as unofficial guardian, wiser and kinder than most fathers; even in his later years, when he was hardly able to stumble along the pavement, he allowed nothing to interfere with his regular visits to schools and orphanages, to see how Jimmy or Charles or Susan was getting on and slip a souvenir of his call into the expectant little palm as he came away. On his hall table,

mysterious paper packages used to lie ready for the adult pensioners who had no claim upon him beyond their destitution. "He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson," was Goldsmith's explanation of his great friend's charity to a man of bad character; and Gavin had the same unostentatious defiance of worldly wisdom in helping those whom everybody else had abandoned as hopelessly incorrigible. His duty to himself was the only duty he ever neglected.

Late on a bitter winter night in Dublin, I was returning home from a theatre when I met him walking down Grafton Street, and tried to accompany him as far as his own door; but after we had gone perhaps half a mile, he insisted on returning with me—ostensibly to finish our talk. As the talk was of no particular importance, and in any event could be pursued under more pleasant conditions, I saw he had some other purpose in view in patrolling that beat; and when I challenged him, he admitted he was seeking an unfortunate girl, the daughter of one of those fine hearty fellows, the best of good company, who die in the odour of alcohol and bequeath their family to the gutter. No man of Gavin's age and physical infirmity should have been abroad on such a night, with sleet sweeping in gusts round every corner and freezing in gritty heaps against the lamp posts; but I knew it would have been futile to urge the danger to his health, and I dwelt, instead, upon several previous efforts to redeem the girl which had proved dismal failures. "Yes," he

said, "but some time she may feel she wants a friend, and I hope God will send me to her."

To act in this way was so spontaneous and instinctive with him that he almost seemed not to deserve so much credit for it as ordinary people, who found self-sacrifice less natural. Yet he had no taint of the Pharisee; you could not imagine him assuming an attitude of moral superiority to any one; but there were few of his circle who did not feel, as Iago felt about Othello, "There is a daily beauty in his life which makes mine ugly." He joined readily in any fun that was going, enjoyed a glass of wine if it were put before him, and though his religion transfused and informed every hour of his existence, even in that his sense of humour would creep out every now and again, "like a furry cub, for a run and a roll over." His eldest son was a priest, his two daughters nuns; and when the Mother Superior of a convent said to him: "I understand you've given all your children to God, Mr Gavin," his irrepressible smile twinkled above his silky white beard as he answered: "Oh no. One of them is a doctor."

Opposite Gavin, there stands in my memory the contrasting figure of a former vice-president of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Ireland, the Rev. John Woods Ballard—six feet two of muscular Evangelicalism. His creed was of the Ironside brand with no nonsense of mysticism about it; there was a super-heated Hell for sinners, and he could name many of its residents. Life furnished no problems that his theology could not solve: Russia was defeated by Japan on account

of the Czar's behaviour towards God's chosen people; the Ottoman Empire waned because, as he phrased it, "God had it in for the Turks"; when Dewey smashed the Spanish fleet at Manilla, it was a vindication of the Divine vengeance overdue for the crimes of the Inquisition. The only ethical point on which I ever heard him express a doubt was whether Mr Gladstone's downfall was to be attributed to the Home Rule Bill, the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, or the betrayal of Gordon, all three happenings being, *prima facie*, equally obnoxious to the designs of Providence. As a preacher (and like most people with a Message, he always wanted to deliver it in person) his merits were rather honesty and vigour than subtlety or charm. If circumstances compelled him to occupy the pew instead of the pulpit, he could not bear the ministrations of any other clergyman for more than five minutes without fidgeting. "Brother So-and-so is very long," was his invariable criticism when the ordeal was over. He carried his incredible likeness to Captain Kettle so far as to write distressing verse to hymn tunes, which he would chant in private company at the smallest provocation or none at all; and during these performances I often hungered for some heroic soul like Mr Bennett in 'Pride and Prejudice' to say: "That will do extremely well; you have delighted us long enough"; for to listen in silence was to court the charge of inattention, while to suggest an amendment was to invoke Apocalyptic thunders. Towards children, the poor, and the afflicted he had a wealth of tenderness that gave him a sym-

pathetic intuition he otherwise lacked; on their behalf his purse was open to the limit of its capacity, and his personal help (preferably in defiance of the Powers that Be) was given without stint; it was impossible to say whether he took more delight in exalting the lowly or humbling the proud. Theoretically, and as a matter of professional etiquette, he feared God; but his real attitude was more that of a competent Major towards a Colonel whose peculiarities he thoroughly understood and approved. In every other direction he was absolutely fearless: towards disease, or the face of man, or the bullet that flieth by night, he presented a courage that towered highest at the moment of danger.

Shortly after he was ordained, he was appointed to a circuit in the South-West of Ireland, where he went the rounds of his scattered flock on horseback after the manner of John Wesley, and held services on Sundays in any convenient farmhouse. As moonlighting was the fashionable pastime of the period, it occurred to some local exponents of the game that the Rev. John was supplementing his religious activities by acting as Government spy. No suspicion could have been more absurd; he would have attacked half a dozen of them, single-handed, with all the simple earnestness and gusto of his nature, if he saw them maltreating an animal or even a policeman; but he was both mentally and morally incapable of deceiving any one; and his whole military feeling made him regard espionage as a thing perhaps necessary, but unsportsmanlike, and out of the question for a

commanding officer, which his secret soul told him he undoubtedly was. Nevertheless, he got one of the death's head scrawls then much in vogue, warning him that if he persisted in his offensive line of action he would shortly be shot. The only notice he took of this courtesy was to announce, in his usual way after the next Sunday service, "This day week, God willing, I shall preach the Gospel at such-and-such a place." While he was ambling down a bye-road on his old nag to keep this appointment, a gun went off behind a hedge and the bullet nipped a piece out of his bridle. He threw the reins on the horse, jumped off, and was over the hedge in a bound; and a few score yards away he saw the marksman scurrying along the edge of the ditch. Now in the matter of exercise the average Irish peasant resembles his own scarecrows, only the scarecrows are more vivacious and representational; and even when the Rev. John had reached the time of life at which people say, "Wonderful old man, Mr Ballard! Did you see the way he blew his nose just there? Exactly like any one else! Wonderful old man!"—even then, I say, his normal walking rate was still five miles per hour; so it will be readily understood that no criminal labourer, not specially trained, could stay the pace with him for more than a couple of laps. There was a brief scuffle which ended in the only possible way: the sharpshooter found himself on his knees at the bottom of the oozy ditch, with his right arm twisted behind him in the fell clutch of Methodist circumstance, and a set of out-size bony knuckles embedded in the nape of

his neck, while the Rev. John poured forth a lengthy thanksgiving to Heaven on behalf of the Church militant, mixed with supplications that his poor benighted brother might experience a true conviction of sin and be led penitent to the Throne of Grace.

It was clear that the Rev. John, as an upholder of law and order, should have handed his captive over to the secular arm at the nearest police barracks; but whether this was too like the procedure of a sister church whose ways he deplored and denounced ("Tell me, sir, why do you go about the country deluding the people?" was one of his favourite gambits when he chanced to meet a Catholic priest alone in a railway carriage), or that, when it came to the point, the Irish instinct in him revolted at calling in the police to settle a purely private dispute, I do not know. At any rate, at this juncture a cloud descends upon the scene, under cover of which the benighted brother melts into the background and disappears from history. The last reel of the film would feature the Rev. John arriving at the farmhouse to hold Divine service, with his boots and trousers very muddy, an empty and unexplained muzzle-loader tucked under his arm, and a glitter, not wholly apostolic, in his large grey eyes. There must have been something in the episode that appealed to the Irish sense of humour and sportsmanship, for thereafter he was allowed to assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man, as he was so well capable of doing, unthreatened and unharmed to the end of his lengthy and honourable career.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEATRICAL SOUVENIRS.

"On parle toujours avec une religieuse prostration de la science dramatique."—M. XAVIER AUBRYET.

THE late J. K. Toomey, a prosperous Dublin solicitor, had a just pride in asserting frequently and with truth that never throughout his career had he postponed an hour's pleasure to business; and in so saying he expressed the desires of his less lucky fellow-citizens. They understood the art of existence; they needed no Herbert Spencer to teach them that life was not for work, nor did they count any time lost that was spent in amusement. "Come and have a gawk" (*i.e.*, a long satisfying stare) was the summons that fetched every one unreluctantly from desk, counter, or consulting room when there was some fresh spectacle, free of charge, in the offing. A race, a fight, an explosion, the entry of a viceroy, the destruction of a public building, the departure of troops, the arrival of a newspaper notoriety, even the opening of a new shop, were alike attractive to that comprehensive yet critical gaze. Failing gratis

recreation, the Dubliner would stint himself of food and almost of drink to go to the theatre. Have I not heard a Dublin man's education defined as "Five years of the Empire and drunk every Saturday night"? He loved a good play or a good opera, but best of all he loved a good row; and if the row was in a theatre, he felt that pleasure was being magnified into luxury. M. Saint-Saens tells us of a Paris impresario who said to him indignantly, after the failure of a new revue: "Look at that! Give them what they want and they won't go to it!" The converse was the case in Dublin. In the Abbey Theatre the productions that eventually became the most successful were first performed before thin unremunerative audiences. It was not until "The Playboy of the Western World" flicked Dublin on the raw that the auditorium was crammed nightly with baying mobs eager for blood and deaf to anything beyond their own yells. If an Englishman hears that a public entertainment is insulting to his religion or his patriotism, he is tempted to stay away from it; he imagines that when the safe in the box-office is empty and the rent becomes a burden, the backers will fail and the play will go to its long home. But an Irishman's deepest and noblest feelings are strangely stimulated by news of an offensive play: it gives him a chance; and he hastens down to the early door with a glad heart and his pockets full of potatoes.

It took a squad of police to prevent some of the performances of "The Dandy Fifth" from turning into assault-at-arms—Heaven alone knows

why, for there was nothing provocative in it, if the fact that it was about English soldiers be not considered an offence; but when the audience ebbed out, the floor was found strewn with stones and bottles brought to call the attention of the actors to the unpopularity of their parts. A political reference rarely failed to stir up bile: the respectful mention of the name of Parnell at the annual pantomime invariably suspended all progress for full five minutes, while those present shouted their gladness or disapproval or both, as the case might be: there was community singing of "The Wearing of the Green," impromptu fights took place at the back of the pit, and strong men tried to throw one another over the rail of the gallery. On the opening night of "John Bull's Other Island" every one concerned trembled on the brink of a volcano: three or four times, when it seemed that nothing could avert an eruption, Fred. Mouillot, the lessee of the Theatre Royal, who had taken the risk gallantly, began to look as if he were hesitating between flight and suicide. The sweaty multitude started to growl hostilities at the stage-Irishism of Tim Haffigan, only to be forestalled by Larry Doyle's announcement that Tim had never been nearer Ireland than Scotland Road. This cut the ground from beneath their feet; they remained restive, but were sullenly afraid that if they resented anything again, Shaw, by another shrewd turn, would make fools of them once more; and since few Irishmen have courage enough to face deserved ridicule, they let pass speeches which, in other circumstances, would

have been the signal for an outbreak. The last danger point came in Act 3 when Father Dempsey deprecated, perfunctorily, the invitation to take the chair at the informal caucus: "The Church has no part in politics." For an instant there was a sinister hush and a sort of incredulous gasp: was Shaw actually daring to represent 'the Church' as pretending to do what 'the Church' always pretends to do? It was little more than the toss of a coin whether the crowd chuckled, or went berserk with rage. One jeering voice would have spurred them into murderous riot; but the lot fell for mirth, a gale of laughter swept from the back of the parterre to the top of the gallery, and for the rest of the evening all rancour fled.

"Ralegh"—a mediocre pageant, redeemed by Miss Winifred Emery's impersonation of Queen Elizabeth—was preceded to Ireland by rumours that it contained insidious propaganda calculated to sap our faith and morals; and the self-appointed guardians of our ethics, who were always ready to save us from our baser selves, made the necessary arrangements to stop this subtle poison at its source. Before I had been quarter of an hour in the theatre on the ominous night, I realised that in the gallery there was a band of stalwarts, linked by some common purpose, with a leader in the dress circle. Nods and becks and secret signals were exchanged between these two areas, usually divided by social barriers much more formidable than wood and plaster; but as all the controversial expressions (if there were any) must have been cut out before the curtain went up, those of

us who were not in the secret could not get any clue to what, exactly, was the movement on foot. During the first interval, the squadron disappeared from their listening-post and presumably remonstrated with their commander on his lack of initiative: they had come to that place of sin to object, and object they would, even if there was nothing to object to. So, in the middle of the second act, when one of the painted mummers made some innocuous 'period' remark (such as that the headsman waited without, or that, by his halidome, Dame Margret was a comely wench) to preserve the Tudor atmosphere, the gentleman in the dress circle stood up and announced solemnly, as if he were reading a Proclamation: "In the name of Catholic Ireland I protest against this outrage." Straightway the deputation rose on its knickerbockered legs and shook its shaggy locks and sang as much as it remembered of "Faith of our Fathers," while the rest of the audience, like the companions of stout Cortez, "looked at each other with a wild surmise," and finally rocked helplessly in shrieks of derisive merriment. I suppose most of us have seen a Rugby forward checked in his triumphant run with the ball by the hideous suspicion that the reason why nobody is interfering with him is that a referee has blown a whistle somewhere. Here a kindred instinct began to warn the vocalists that in some mysterious manner they were spiritually 'off-side'; and the melody grew fainter, quavered, and collapsed in a shame-faced panic — a finale that, like the Gorham judgement, gave general satisfaction.

And again :—

About forty years ago, ' Lord ' George Sanger's Circus opened its moral and instructive entertainment for all ages and both sexes in an enormous tent erected on a vacant field where Fairview touches Ballybough. Fairview, I should say, is a Dublin suburb compared with which New Cross or Camden Town would seem arrogantly opulent ; and Ballybough occupies a plane two or three stages lower in the social strata. The principal attraction of the Circus was ' Victorina, the Strongest Woman on Earth,' who with her own fair, but by no means frail, hands broke steel chains, lifted incredible weights, and caught a metal ball fired out of an imitation cannon by a real spring. A reward of (if I remember aright) twenty-five pounds was promised to any amateur who could accomplish the same feats ; and this proposal smiled upon the fancy of Mr ' Jake ' Stone, a popular resident in the district, who afterwards went upon the stage and achieved temporary fame as ' The Dublin Hercules.' Naturally, on the appointed night all the rank and fashion of Ballybough assembled to watch the contest ; and the excitement grew hectic as he lifted the various weights with apparent ease. I remember the stillness that fell upon us as he approached the last of the tests—the steel chain. We had a sense of personal responsibility for his success, and bowed under the pressure of the silent prayers that were offered from the back benches in agonised entreaty that our champion might win.

Stone crouched over his task, his left hand

gripping one end of the chain against his thigh, his right pulling and twisting it with mighty jerks. There was an instant of supreme tension, and then—I can hear it still—a sharp 'ting' like a bullet striking glass, as the chain snapped.

A hurricane of cheers drowned all other sounds until the crowd had shrieked itself to exhaustion; but when the ringmaster could make himself heard, it was to perpetrate the greatest mistake of his life. What he should have done, of course, was to hand over the prize at once with a congratulatory speech, and secure 'Jake' for the circus. But his nerves were on edge, he lost his temper and his head, and threw away the opportunity. So far as I could gather from my luckily distant seat, he said the chain had a flaw and the prize would not be awarded.

Immediately a thousand voices raged in protest. "Give the man his money!" screamed the proletariat, surging towards the ring. I have yet a vision of a bald-headed and indignant gentleman in the front row attempting to shove back with his umbrella a brawny coal-heaver who brushed him good-temperedly aside as irrelevant, and simply flowed over him into the arena. Two of the negro attendants tried to remove some seekers for justice who had crossed the barrier, and instantly the fight became general. Ballybough swarmed into the centre and drove the circus men towards the far end of the tent where, through the fog of war, I got a glimpse of both parties discussing the question at issue with any weapons that came handy, from wooden staves to porter

bottles. At the other end, the women and the more timid struggled to escape, while round the pole that supported the roof swayed a thick cluster of hooligans, anxious for the honour of pulling it down. Along the sides, skirmishers enfiladed the fighting line of the enemy with cane chairs hurled from the stalls; and one of them varied his contribution to the ensemble by taking occasional pot-shots at the flaming naphtha cressets. He had been celebrating the victory in advance, and his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, boded forth so many forms of things invisible that the real lamps were lost amidst their imaginary replicas, and he was unable to add a fatal fire to the night's amusement. Close by me, the father of a terrified family drew a heavy pocket-knife and hacked a way out through the wall of the tent; and I judged it prudent to follow his lead in the spirit of the old stage direction: "Exit cautious through gap in hedge." When I emerged I met a file of police coming from their barracks. Fortunately it was close at hand, for they arrived barely in time to stop another earnest experimenter from opening the door of the lions' cage—just to see what would happen.

It was the dearest money that was ever saved in Dublin. When I passed the field next morning, there was nothing left of the circus but the tan ring; and the débris on the trampled grass was eloquent of a wrong redressed.

For some reason that I could never fathom, it was almost a tradition for the 'gods' in the Round Room of the Rotunda to be restless and noisy. A sample evening is still fixed in my memory, not

by the disorder, which was normal, but by the singular infelicity of a remark made from the stage. The staple of the entertainment was an exhibition of magic-lantern pictures expounded by an overpoweringly gentlemanly lecturer, who had learned his discourse by heart, and had to mumble the last half-dozen words over again to himself to catch the thread whenever it was broken by a hitch in changing the slides. This, according to the posters, was the artistic and educative side of the show; its monotony was relieved by variety performances such as, in regular theatres, are put on to give the bars a chance. Quite early in the proceedings a turbulent gentleman had been dragged from the tip of the semi-circular gallery to the exit at the opposite end of the curve; the ushers had to disentangle him from every bench on the way until they reached the door, when there was a convulsive heave, a sound like the delivery of a bag of coals down a cellar shoot, and the troubled waters subsided for the time being. Later on, an unfortunate juggler of the type that empties Hippodromes and makes Empires mourn was hooted unmercifully; a raucous barytone sang: "I'm off to Philadelphia in the Morning" to be greeted with the unanswerable query: "An' why not?"; and when the male member of a troupe of equilibrists balanced himself on a slack wire held at one end by a steel stay and at the other by the gleaming teeth of one of his maiden partners, a wheedling voice from aloft pleaded with him, "Please don't jump on it, misther—she might want her face again!" Still, even the rowdiest

Dublin audience had a basic sense of chivalry: no matter how incompetent an artiste might be, so long as she kept within the bounds of decency she was sure of a patient hearing, and even some benevolent applause, if it were quite clear that she was not going to give an encore; and the lecturer would have saved a heavy strain on the manners of the assembly if he had retired tactfully after announcing: "The next item on the programme I have the honour of presenting to you, ladies and gentlemen, is the world-famous operatic vocalist, Madame Spaghetti Del Hara in the celebrated ballad 'Il Bacio.'" But he glared at the gallery and added defiantly: "No pass-out checks given during this performance." And the poor lady, who had indeed been a prima-donna before nine-tenths of her convulsed hearers were born, came on to face Arditi's vocal fireworks with the same gallantry she had shown in marrying her fourth husband.

During the last century, the Rotunda provided a welcome casual home for all kinds of performances that could not be housed in ordinary Dublin theatres. Dickens gave his readings there; and there I have attended entertainments as widely separated as Sarasate and the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, Moody and Sankey and Poole's Myriorama, political meetings, smoking concerts, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. In the Pillar Room adjoining, we thrilled at the wonders of 'Pepper's Ghost'—an illusion that would bear reviving for the sake of the younger generation. In the gardens outside, the Henglers had erected the wooden building where annually they held

their circus and delighted my heart with ' Whimsical Walker,' ' Handy Andy,' and the evergreen ' Water Novelty.' I have a dim memory of other exhibitions—a panorama of Jerusalem, and (much later) a Swiss Village; but I cannot be sure whether these were in Henglers' building or another on the same spot which was also eventually dismantled. The site remained vacant until the roller-skating craze seized Dublin like an influenza epidemic, and a shed was built on the old foundations for the accommodation of the victims. I was not a skater myself, but I went once to look at the revelry.

As I approached the rink, my ear was caught by a distant moan, like the surge of the tide on a pebble beach, which, as I pushed aside a curtain, swelled to a deep-throated roar. Then the maddening beauty of the scene fell upon me. The bare timbers of the shed were partially concealed by calico flags and advertisements. In the left-hand corner, learners were clutching a friendly rail and recovering, one by one, their escaping feet; to the right, attendants buckled skates on the boots of those about to join in the winter sports; on a platform beside me, the Idle Rich were feasting upon stewed tea and faded confectionery. The noise I heard as I entered was not of human suffering: it came from the multitude of wheels rasping the wooden floor in the centre abandoned to the experts; but none the less, the pastime seemed more amusing to spectators than actors, so I chose a section of pine bench reasonably free from protruding nails, and sat down to study it.

As I did so, a deafening concussion of brass brought me in alarm to my feet, but it was only the band. They seemed the sole persons present who were clearly enjoying themselves—particularly the maestro who belaboured the drum with a heartiness that showed he was deriving physical benefit from the exercise. When I turned to consider the skaters how they spin, I did not observe any signs of thoughtless mirth on *their* faces: they swept miserably by, as if driven by the blasts of the Dantean Inferno. Here, rigid and erect, came a lonely student, his brow corrugated with thought, his chin moving mechanically as he repeated to himself the words of the instructor; and even as I gazed, his head snapped backwards, his arms waved frantically in the air, and he was slammed against the surface of the rink—

> "That falls were common did not make
> His own less bitter, rather more.
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening, but some bones did ache."

Raising himself on hands and knees, he tried to disarm criticism with a cheerful smile; but, candidly, it was not a success. I remember, too, a gilded youth with copious jewellery on tie, fingers, and watch chain. Obviously during the day he was a Man about Town, a desperate fellow with the girls; here, he was only Fear made manifest in human flesh. As he launched himself at the difficult corner, his eyes would glaze and cold beads of perspiration stand upon his brow in

the second of agony when heel rubbed against heel; and then would come disaster or, with a desperate contortion, recovery, and he would re-enter the straight with a proud smile hovering on his lips.

I got some faint understanding why people thus willingly yielded their bodies to Clotho when a gong sounded, the band stayed its devastating course, and a notice 'Partners Only' was displayed on the distant wall. The incandescent lamps faded out and four spot-lights began to splutter blue and purple rays upon the floor. The band resumed; but its brazen and syncopated bellowings were lulled into the entreaty of the 'Faust' Waltz. The couples stole hand-in-hand into the shimmer of colours, and as they wove their way blissfully round the rink, I perceived that this was another form of the glorious Irish game of 'make-believe.' It was Vision. It was Romance. The players no longer saw themselves as Michael the bank clerk and Bridget from the ribbon counter: they were Faust and Marguerite, they were Paolo and Francesca; and this sorry outhouse was some faery lake begirt with snow-clad mountains and silent under alien stars. A hundred icy draughts beat upon them in vain; the band achieved miracles of discordancy and left them untroubled; they glided upon sheets of jasper and floated in the kingdom of dreams.

CHAPTER XIV.

Theatrical Souvenirs (*continued*).

"The best in this sort are but shadows, and the worst no worse, if imagination do but amend them."—*A Midsummer-night's Dream.*

The old Dublin Theatre Royal was burned down before my day, but its glories were still dear to the elder generation. I used to know O'Donnell, formerly the first trumpet player in its orchestra, a veteran who had performed before the Duke of Wellington and the Czar, Nicholas 1st of Russia, and had helped to organise the musical section of the Dublin International Exhibition in 1865. Incidentally, he had organised a salary of £6 a week for himself, as principal trumpet; but foreseeing that the Finance Committee might have one mind with but the single thought of economy, he distributed the overhead charge amongst several anonymous officials on the wage sheet, thus: Librarian, £1, 10s.; Musical Secretary and Correspondent, £2; Deputy Conductor of Military Bands, £1, 10s.—leaving Mr O'Donnell with a nominal stipend of £1 a week, which nobody could grudge to a musician of his eminence. Like most people

connected with stageland, he took a lively interest in its inhabitants and affairs, and had many reminiscences of the singers and actors of the past, including the great Macready, who stood easily foremost in his esteem; but I neglected to follow Captain Cuttle's advice and make a note while it was yet time, and I can now recollect only two fragments from his anecdotage. One deals with a vendetta between the 'cellist and the bassoon player of the theatre orchestra. The bassoon player had scored first blood by persuading the rest of the band to 'rush' the finale of the "Poet and Peasant" Overture, in the middle of the 'cellist's solo cadenza. The 'cellist stuck to his work like a little man, and when the final chord trembled into silence, he was still heard trilling on his first string; after which he executed a graceful 'turn,' and made a Queen Anne's fan at his rival. All the same, he had lost what professional players call his 'bit of fat' and the consequent applause from the audience. So, on the earliest convenient opportunity, he stuffed the top of his enemy's bassoon with feathers. This was not noticeable until the fundamental note was sounded, as all the higher notes spoke through the holes made for them; but eventually the fatal double B flat was reached, all the holes were stopped by keys or fingers, and the instrument became an eight-feet pop-gun, which discharged a cloud of feathers into the air to float over the enraged performer and the amazed stalls.

The other story was about Macready. He was rehearsing the stock company that was to support

him in "Macbeth," and had worked himself into one of his habitual rages over the slovenly way in which the minor actors struggled through their business. A luckless 'super' taking the part of Donalbain slouched past the Duncan of the cast with much the same sideways nod he would give to a stage carpenter. Macready leaped at him like a panther. "Do you know who that is?" he thundered.

"M-m-m-mister Smith," stuttered the player.

"Nothing of the kind, sir! . . . That is the Anointed King of Scotland. . . . Take care, sir, to treat him as such!"

And O'Donnell assured me that so deeply was the 'super' impressed by Macready's menacing visage and terrific voice that to the end of his life, if he met Smith in the street, his hand stole timidly to his hat brim, and he remained humbly bareheaded until they parted.

At the Leinster Hall, which was built on the site of the old Theatre Royal, we had public meetings, bazaars, minor exhibitions, and at least one waxwork. In it I have listened to all sorts of singers from Albert Chevalier to Santley, and at the Popular Concerts watched dapper Dr Collison go through his regular apologetic scena with the telegram from Ysaye or Paderewski or de Reszke (or whoever the advertised celebrity for the evening might be) regretting his inability to attend. And there, about Christmastide, Arthur Rousbey would erect his cardboard proscenium and embark on his usual season of Grand Opera.

It was the fashion to sneer at Arthur Rousbey,

but he ought rather to have been counted amongst our benefactors. No doubt, his singers were either past their prime or not of the first rank, his scenery and effects were freely extemporised, and his very scratch orchestra was largely recruited from amateur talent. (By the way, J. K. Toomey was one of these recruits and usually pleased himself and his friends in that capacity, though perhaps not the conductor; he could not keep time accurately, and depended for a lead on the fiddlers around him. Once the man at the same desk suddenly raised his violin to his chin towards the end of a long 'rest,' as if he were about to start. Toomey fell into the trap and made a false entry, producing a look of grieved indignation from the conductor. "The next time you do that," said Toomey to his treacherous friend, "I'll break my bow across your bottle nose, and you can tell your conductor why, afterwards!" Thus harmony, heavenly harmony, was restored.) But as I was about to say when I interrupted myself, Rousbey gave us operas which, otherwise, we had no chance of hearing. 'Sonnambula,' 'La Favorita,' 'Le Châlet,' 'La Belle Galathée,' 'Fra Diavolo' occur to me as melodic dainties of a byegone age that I probably should have missed if he had not been incited to stage them. He was richly endowed with the not ignoble vanity of the artist, and he took himself seriously in his quality of purveyor of music to the people. If you felt that life was a dull drab thing unless you heard, say, "Rienzi," you had only to write to the papers pointing out the grave omission of this masterpiece from the

programme, and get a friend to support you with another letter referring to Mr Arthur Rousbey's well-known desire to present all the best operas in a manner second to none. These tributes would come under Arthur's eye together with the morning bacon and eggs and remind him that he must be worthy of himself: he would straightway advertise 'Rienzi' for next week "in consequence of the wide public demand," and then gather his cohorts, borrow a copy of the score, and plunge into the mad adventure of rehearsals. The result might not be the production that Wagner hoped for, but Dublin at large thought it was probably quite as good as he deserved. Arthur, with all his limitations, merits honourable mention amongst those that "give delight and hurt not."

The Leinster Hall was eventually reconstructed into the new Theatre Royal, of which I have already written. It has now degenerated into a Hippodrome—the change of name imports a change of ideal and orientation. Personally I trace the beginning of the downfall to the introduction of prize fights into the temple of Thespis. The Burns-Roche fiasco, which lasted about half a minute, was particularly memorable: one patron of the ring, who had paid two guineas for his seat, turned to put his overcoat behind him, and when he faced the gladiators the fight was over. Most of the servant girls in Dublin had been saying Rosaries for Roche's success, and his failure cast a blight on boxing and the theatre. Comedy would be out of place and tragedy an anti-climax; so the management took up Variety as a last resort.

As I have also referred to the characteristics of the Music Hall in Dame Street which was known successively as Dan Lowry's, The Star, The Empire, and Olympia, I only recur to it now in passing allusion to the boxing and wrestling matches that were sometimes promoted there. One evening, at a spirited contest between two amateur wrestlers who aspired to become professionals, the seat in front of me was occupied by a staid and elderly gentleman whom I put down, mentally, as the manager of a branch bank, or an accountant in good practice. He watched the struggle with quiet intelligent interest, apparently unmoved by the howls of advice and encouragement the 'gods' were bestowing on the combatants locked together on the mat; but when one of the wrestlers gained an advantage, he sprang to his feet, hurled his shiny top-hat broadcast over the stalls, and shouted at the top of his voice: "Rub the ear off him, Mike!"

The Abbey, the only Dublin theatre known outside Ireland, was, as I have said, not normally prosperous in the commercial sense; partly, no doubt, because we were so accustomed to the English accent on our stage that an Irish one struck us as grotesque and funny; and partly from the natural disinclination to honour persons making profits in their own country, or to believe that our neighbours and friends could write tolerable plays or become competent actors. The tragedies, too, that we saw there were not cut to the Dublin pattern. At heart, Dublin was romantic in the straightforward style of the schoolboy and the

mill hand and Mr G. K. Chesterton. It wanted stirring deeds and noble figures and just sentiments in elegant diction. It cheered Mr Lewis Waller, adored Sir George Alexander, shuddered at Sir Herbert Tree, and sobbed over Sir Martin Harvey; and it revelled in portrayals of aristocratic intrigue such as 'Diplomacy,' where the well-born hero said "Ha!" at the right moments, and tubbed himself every morning, and despised people like Russians who never had a bath. It had to be educated up to the very peculiar romanticism of Synge and the very leaden realism of St John Ervine; and, as Carlyle says, sitting still and being pumped into is not an exhilarating process. On the comedy side it was more appreciative: the fun of Boyle and Lady Gregory and their lesser followers was enjoyed wholeheartedly. But even there, the Irish habit of groundless suspicion crept in to impute baseness. It was well known that in some of the Dublin theatres it was part of the attendants' duty to lead and encourage the applause; and I have heard a similar accusation levelled without an atom of evidence against the Abbey. One slanderer to whom I said that B——'s new play had been well received, grunted: "Ay, it would be. He has enough hand-me-down relations to make an audience of his own. And he knows a lot of fellows that'll applaud anything—men with big hands and feet that 'd stamp the floor to pieces if he got the actor to read Thom's Directory to them."

But above all, the atmosphere of the Abbey was against it. It occupied the site of the old

morgue, and the architect had not departed far enough from its former associations. Dublin had a confirmed belief that a theatre was a place where you were supposed to enjoy yourself, and liked it garish in crimson and gold, and blazing with electric light. But when you went to the Abbey, you entered a sombre and colourless den, full of dark corners and creaking boards, and you stumbled to your place over umbrellas and gouty feet. When the curtain rose, the sight of a pair of haggard crones laying out a corpse did not make you laugh as much as you expected; your mind kept turning to the thought of live happy people walking up and down in the streets; and then, somehow, you found yourself round the corner in the warmth of Mooney's, arguing about compulsory Irish or the Lord Mayor's salary, with something pleasant seen through a glass darkly before you; and you felt that a new and rosier dawn was breaking over Erin.

"I use the word 'glamour' not so much because I know what it means as because I have never used it before," says Mr Bill Nye. For similar reasons I referred to compulsory Irish—merely as a subject of frequent acrimonious debate, and not to pave the way for an irrelevant anecdote after the style of the Principal Boy in pantomime who discovers that the Widow Twankey's kitchen in Pekin has an intense spiritual resemblance to her Sunset Home in Susquehanna—thus bridging the gap to her next song-hit by a natural and easy transition, and at the same time giving the indispensable cue to the band. But the mention of the

vernacular reminds me of a former pupil who was a Republican, a sinner, and a devotee of Irish, on which he used to expatiate so fervently and tediously that all other bores became relatively tolerable. I could listen with a greater show of zest to dyspeptics, motorists, financial experts, and even specialists in the obscure but deserving Italian painters of the early Renaissance. Having passed the examination for which I coached him, he told me he was going in for medicine.

"Then enter at the National University," said I. "You need only one language beside English, and you're well up in Irish already."

"No," said he, "I won't. They've made Irish compulsory there, so I'll try the College of Surgeons where I can take optional French."

"But you don't know any French."

"No matter. If I work hard, I'll learn all I need of it in six months. I'm damned if I'll let them stuff their bloody Irish down my throat."

And he didn't.

From this graceful digression I return to theatrical Dublin. The Gaiety was just what the Abbey was not—a playhouse. It was well lit and brightly decorated, and had the paradoxical arrangement of most provincial theatres, where you discover the upper ten on the ground floor and the lower classes at the top; and since the performances drew all sorts and conditions of men and women to the place, it was not feasible for the proprietors, as in some London theatres, to cater exclusively for either East End or West: to achieve success

they had to please both at once. There was, too, a sound dramatic tradition to keep the standard high, and not many Irishmen are without enough of the mountebank in them to be capable judges of his art. It was not sufficient for a comedian to make them laugh, or a tragedian to hold them from the siren summons of the bar. Between the acts, they discussed the players and analysed their style, while the older habitués compared them disadvantageously with Macready, Barry Sullivan, Phelps, or King; and there were violent disputes whether this or that effect was a legitimate stroke of genius or only the clap-trap of a charlatan. If, as sometimes happened, funds did not permit me to hire the Viceregal Box, I waived all ceremony aside and fought for a place in the gallery; and I was often humbled at the knowledge and discrimination I found there. In London I have seen row upon row of well-dressed people assisting at a Shakespearian production with all the jaded look of a man who is doing a good action; they seemed to enter the theatre as if it were a cold shower, and take their seats with a desperate resolution as if they were pulling the chain: they were in for it and bound themselves for very shame to sit it out. Dublin did not view Shakespeare as a respectable man for whom something ought really to be done; it did not regard his plays as if they were desirable but remote, like a sunset; it took them heartily as a tremendous lark. Whether Benson favoured us with the Oxford reading of a part, or Oscar Asche stormed through it, or Tree did his best to enliven it with ingenious buffooneries, the

Dublin gallery enjoyed every word and absorbed the poetry through their skins.

Rudyard Kipling has not failed to notice this habit and reproduce it in Mulvaney: "I am av the opinion av Polonius whin he said, 'Don't fight wid evry scutt for the pure joy av fightin', but if ye do, knock the nose av him, first and frequent.'" This trick of free paraphrase is exactly in the Dublin style. I remember a casual street beggar separating me from a few pence with the irresistible appeal: "Had I but served me God wid half the zeal I served the Corporation, I wouldn't have to be thrubblin' ye for the price of a dthrink now." From childhood we were on familiar terms with Shakespeare and our religion, and we took liberties with both. When I was a boy bathing with my schoolfellows on the North Bull, it was no uncommon thing for some one to say: "Give us a spache, Charley." And Charley, 'clothed on with chastity,' and possibly a pair of much-cobbled boots to protect his feet from the rocks, would rise and declaim, in a rich Cork accent, Othello's address to the Senate, or Mark Antony's oration over the body of Cæsar. In later life, from my eyrie in the gallery, I have witnessed coal porters, black from their day's work, following the action on the stage in thumbed and grimy copies of Dick's Penny Shakespeare; and they were vigilant connoisseurs who did not lightly tolerate departure from the text. There was a drayman at a performance of 'The Winter's Tale' who gave loud vent to his disappointment that the incident, *Exit Antigonous pursued by a*

bear, was left in part to the imagination. "Where's the bear?" he shouted. "I want to see the bear." And it took two companions and the burly attendant to restrain him from climbing down to the stage to thresh the matter out with the responsible authorities then and there. Again, when Sir Johnstone Forbes Robertson gave us the best Hamlet of my generation, there were two servant girls sitting before me, and I heard one, who had evidently not caught the drift of Laertes' ungracious speech to Ophelia, ask the other: "What's he sayin' now?"

"He's tellin' her she mustn't let Hamlet be walkin' her out of a Sunday," said her friend; and though the explanation lacks the superb effrontery of Shakespeare's English, I submit that it was a faithful rendering of his purport. Indeed it was his most tropical moments that we appreciated most and felt were in our own line, albeit glorified by his imagination. It may have been that he created in us the taste by which he is enjoyed; or we may have retained the Elizabethan love for grandiose images and equivoques and flaming epithets, as we retained some Elizabethan pronunciations and idioms; but when the curtain fell and we jostled one another in the passages on our way out, I could hear the great luxuriant phrases rolled lovingly by Irish tongues as if they were good to eat: "Multitudinous seas incarnadine"—"Superfluous kings for messengers"—"Night's candles are burned out and jocund day stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops." On the other hand, I must, in candour, record the

criticism of a member of the orchestra on 'As You Like It': "I didn't think much of it; it's a pretty poor plot." But he was a fiddler, and music stands alone as the art that does not condescend to know her peers.

I should be an ungrateful dog if I did not pay some tribute to the Gaiety for the thousands of happy hours I spent in it. As well as the tragedians I have mentioned, George Alexander often came there, and Edward Terry, and John Hare, and Weedon Grossmith—his brother, George Grossmith, senior, gave his inimitable society entertainments in the Antient Concert Rooms; and if we do not get such performers across the Channel nowadays, the fault (dear Brutus!) may lie neither in the 'stars' nor in ourselves, but in the increased cost of transit. There I made acquaintance with the Gilbert and Sullivan operas; and there for the first time I heard the violins stream into that ripple of a laugh that is the Figaro overture. Its pleasures were, perhaps, all the more delightful for being somewhat difficult of access. In Dublin, the queue system was introduced late and adopted grudgingly. Unless there were enough vigorous constables present to maintain the files, the queue was always likely, at any excitement, to form into a scrimmage, the units pushing indefinitely for room to breathe, but the thrust of the whole mass tending spasmodically towards the theatre. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Gaiety, souvenirs of the performance were to be given away to every member of the audience; so, faintly trusting the larger hope of getting in, I

was at the early doors an hour and a half before they opened. Twice, without the least volition on my part, I was carried across the street and rapped against the shop windows opposite; and twice, on the rebound, I was brought back to the entrance. The second return happened to coincide with the moment when the door-keeper slipped the bars and fled for his life, and I was lifted on the surge clear up to the pay-box, over fourteen hard, angular, and unsympathetic stone steps without touching one of them. Thus I got in undamaged (reasonable wear and tear excepted) and secured my free illustrated souvenir, a valued trophy of the conflict. A stately friend of mine was not so lucky. When I caught sight of him as he entered the maelstrom, he wore a crush hat and a fur overcoat, and looked like a Russian nobleman of the *ancien régime* in reduced circumstances. When I met him inside, he was minus his collar and his hat, and the overcoat was little more than a relic of vanished glories. "I had to fight three stiff rounds before I got in," he told me, "and when I reached the gallery, there were two men hanging on my back and one holding on by my ear; and it wasn't *me* they were anxious to have see, either—I noticed that."

The Queen's Theatre had been the Dublin home of 'the legitimate drama' for so long that the memory of the oldest inhabitant ran not to the contrary. Sir Henry Irving had appeared there in his youth, and Toole and Bancroft; and there, more recently, it was my privilege to see the late John Lawson, the gifted crockery-smasher of

'Humanity,' drape himself over the kitchen table in his dressing-room and give me a foretaste of the Hamlet with which he intended to electrify Piccadilly on his return from his South American tour; and when, later on, I heard Londoners grumbling about air raids, I was able to assure them that there were some things they had escaped. 'The Quanes' was what Mr Shaw would call a typical Irish theatre. For nine months out of the twelve its programme was English melodrama with Lancashire actors, and during the rest of the year, except for the annual pantomime and a rare visit from a fourth-rate opera company, it was devoted to the Boucicault school of Irish drama: 'The Shaughraun,' 'The Colleen Bawn,' 'The Informer,' 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' 'Lord Edward, or '98.' In their transit across the Channel the melodramas lost a good deal of their aplomb. Their begetters usually relied on a special scenic or mechanical effect—a railway collision, an earthquake, or a storm in the Sahara—to make up for any want of plausibility in the dialogue; and so far as possible these interesting events were staged with an eye to Realism. But the Dublin management were Futuristic Idealists who believed in the heroic theory of Dumas père: "All I need is two planks and a passion." True, the original posters were put up on our city hoardings to allure youthful inexperience; but the hectic promise of the pictures was rarely fulfilled on the boards. I have seen the palace of a German prince luxuriously furnished with two garden chairs and a handful of paper shavings in the property fire-

place; a tattered backcloth of the Lakes of Killarney serving for the Thames Embankment by moonlight; and (in a really creditable production of 'Julius Cæsar') "Pompey's statua" represented by the wooden profile of two dogs fighting.

The players were nicely adjusted to their environment. As they lounged, unshaven and down-at-heel, outside the stage door in Brunswick Street, they reminded me inevitably of Mr Vincent Crummles, and Crabbe's bitter lines that the dying Scott could not bear to hear because "they would touch poor Terry to the very quick."

> "Sad happy race, soon raised and soon depressed,
> Your lives all spent in jeopardy and jest;
> Poor without prudence, with afflictions vain;
> Not warned by misery, nor enriched by gain."

Often they had to travel in pawn when the receipts of their previous engagement had not covered their expenses. The lessee of 'The Quanes' advanced the price of their tickets to the railway or steamship company, and at the end of their week in Dublin he deducted their fares from the profits; and if there was nothing left over, the owner of the next theatre on their list could repeat the process if he liked. Touring organisations were therefore cut down to the smallest conceivable dimensions, and each man in his time played many parts. I have seen the same actor take the rôle of the good squire who was killed in Act 1, lead the mourning villagers in Act 2, appear as the detective in charge of the case in Act 3, terrify the

murderer by an unexpected return as his own ghost in Act 4, and preside as judge over the trial and acquittal of the hero in Act 5. To few is it given to contemplate life from so many different angles in three crowded hours.

I once asked the manager (let me call him Smith) of a semi-amateur company appearing there, if the tour had been a success. "Excellent," said he. "We played to first-class houses everywhere. But I'll never travel with that yahoo, Jones, again. The brute has no sense of decency. I brought him into the dining-room of the best hotel in Limerick, and I says to him: 'What'll you have?' like a gentleman. And d'ye know what he answers? 'A quart of porther,' says he. Fancy your principal tenor sayin' a thing like that! Gives you away at once."

Afterwards I had a chance of hearing Jones on the topic. He was exuberant over the artistic triumphs they had won, but was severe on Smith. "Every day was salary day—if you could screw anythin' out of him. He's gettin' an old man now, but if he saw a sixpence on the ground, he's not too ould to pick it up—in one motion. Imagine doin' an exactin' part like Faust, an' takin' four encores for the Gyarden Scene, and then bein' offered a shillin' compensation! It's not good enough."

Lastly, I collected an impartial opinion on the show from the resident conductor of the Queen's. "Well," he said, after some thought, "the people that was singin' said it was splendid; but the people that was listenin' said it was rotten."

I am afraid that the uncharitable might apply the same remark to his own orchestra, which held high rank amongst the horrors of Dublin: it was small but rarely unanimous on points of pitch or tempo, and, like jazz music, never gave you any wonderful surprises except when it turned out to be worse than you thought it possibly could be. Whenever the regular clarinetist saw an opportunity for coming in out of tune, he could be relied upon to seize it; but on one occasion he sent a deputy who did not confine himself to these legitimate openings but improvised additional discords of his own. At last even the conductor remonstrated: "This piece is written in D natural—two sharps—and you're playing it in C!"

"In the parts I comes from," said the virtuoso, "some plays the sharps and some doesn't. *I* don't."

In addition to the clarinetist there were a few fiddlers—I forget exactly how many; but I know that one of them said of another: "I'll tell you what he's like; any night he isn't there it's as good as having two first-rate men extra in the band." These artists supported the tragic passages of the play with appropriate scratchy tremolos; and at moments of tenser excitement, men armed to the teeth with cornets and trombones would hurl themselves into the mêlée and add another pang to the villain's defeat, while the audience, carried away by the cunning of the scene, howled advice and encouragement to the hero. According to local tradition, it was during an opera at the Queen's, when a new and youthful tenor had

difficulty in bearing away eighteen stone of fainting mezzo-soprano bodily from the stage, that the gallery dropped the helpful suggestion: "Make two thrips of it, sirr." Sometimes the enthusiasts relieved their feelings in other ways that were not without their inconveniences to harmless persons like myself who had no intention of contributing any share to the entertainment. I should explain that the seats in the pit consisted of long planks lavishly upholstered with a streak of red paint; and there one evening, for my greater comfort, I folded up my overcoat and used it as a cushion. Hardly had I settled down when I felt a light tap on my shoulder.

"What's the matter?" I said, looking round.

"Would yiz mind movin' yer overcoat?" said a voice from behind with winning courtesy. "I'd be apt to be shpittin' out durin' the performance."

Such anticipatory politeness, however, was quite exceptional; and in the lower portions of the house, any one who wished to study the play to advantage and did not care about appearances, would have been better advised to equip himself with an umbrella than an opera-glass.

I am glad that my last glimpse of 'The Quanes' was in keeping with my memories of it. I happened to be passing it just as the early doors opened. The queue had, of course, resolved itself into the familiar turmoil foaming about the entrance, and one unfortunate man, cast aside in an eddy, was impaled against a corner by the surging mob. I sent across to him a sympathetic smile, which

he caught and returned with a grin of perfect comprehension and good-humour. "Begob, they haven't made this place safe for democracy anyhow!" he shouted. And with that friendly message in my ears, I bade the old house farewell.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HUMANITIES AND MUSIC.

"Humanly speaking, it is a more important matter to play upon the fiddle, even badly, than to write huge works upon recondite subjects."—R. L. STEVENSON.

"Any fool could make up an article, Mawruss, but it takes a feller with judgement to sell it."—MONTAGUE GLASS.

FROM 1897 to 1922 my regular itinerary on Saturday afternoons led me to the Liffey at the crossing which you called Carlisle Bridge if you were a Unionist, and O'Connell Bridge if you were a Nationalist; but the district I haunted was a sanctuary from politics and sacred to the Muses. It began in a laneway off Aston's Quay where was located the natural resort of all great and good men—the second-hand bookstalls. These you had to glance over at least once a week; for though the mass of printed rubbish remained constant, there was a trickling stream of change, and amongst the medley of tattered directories, calendars, antique guide-books, forgotten travels, sermons, essays on The Picturesque, and old magazines, you had always a chance of finding one of the rarities dear to the

heart of the bookworm. I remember buying a copy of the first edition of Dr Johnson's first work for twopence, and for a penny a bound set of the 'Moniteur' recording the establishment of the French Republic and the execution of Louis XVI.; and I missed an Elzevir Cicero because I was fool enough to think that nobody else would discover it until I picked it up on my way back.

Next came the bookshops proper, facing the river. The first in order belonged to Massey who concentrated on Irish history: close to him was the stout and genial Clohissey, who had graduated from the carts and sold what he had at low prices, but whose stock was not extensive; and last on that side was George Webb, the best business man of the fraternity and most satisfactory to deal with. He bought widely and wisely, knew exactly what he had to sell, charged a fair profit on his wares, and did not fix two prices according to the presumed ignorance or knowledge of his customer. You were not likely to come across amazing bargains in his shop; he had been there first. I have bought original editions of Conrad and Stevenson from him at a shilling apiece, but that was their value in the second-hand market then, and it was only the passing of time and the enthusiasm of collectors that raised their price to pounds. To him drifted most of the professional men and University students looking for text-books, miscellaneous buyers who purchased rather to enjoy than to study, and the specialists who sought, after their bent, for family histories, foreign literature, minor poetry, reports of learned Societies,

trade manuals, or treatises on the care of fowl and illustrated descriptions of Our Native Plants at Bay.

From Webb's, the ordained route lay across the Toll Bridge to the doyen of the trade, Michael Hickey, generally and affectionately known as 'The Robber.' Summer or winter, rain or fine, he seemed a permanent fixture in his place on Bachelor's Walk, and when he died, we had the sense of loss Londoners would feel if Nelson's column disappeared from Trafalgar Square. On Bank holidays he put up his shutters as a concession to custom; but if you were a regular client and had found favour in his eyes by an appreciation of his Rabelaisian humour, you had only to rap on the side door and Michael would ascend from the kitchen in shirt and trousers—and probably with traces of the morning egg in his beard—to let you in; and then you were free to rummage through the six-storied Georgian house, its walls, floors, and staircases packed tight with books from cellar to attic, while he returned to his favourite task of selecting the first three horses for the next important race on the Calendar. Sometime in bygone years he had gained a prize of two hundred pounds from a sporting paper by achieving this feat, and he lived in hopes of repeating the coup, so that your hunt for treasure trove was always likely to be interrupted by shouts from below asking you to say whether you fancied Panjandrum or Vladivostock for the Lincoln Handicap. He would have agreed with Mr Arnold Bennett that 'pavement' was the most beautiful word in the English language; for notwithstanding

his fairly frequent allusions to " the bit of a farm up Navan way " of which he was the landlord, I doubt if he ever visited it. Once only did I know him to disappear from his stand for a holiday; and on that occasion after about three days' absence he suddenly returned, very eulogistic of the charm and healthiness of country life : " Wondtherful scenery ! . . . Grand air ! . . . Fresh milk and butther every mornin' ! . . . My God, fancy any wan livin' there ! ! "

Of the contents of books he knew nothing, and of their money value little, beyond what he could glean from their binding and condition. He was quite capable of demanding ten shillings for a volume on the strength of its gaudy back; and if you suggested sixpence as a reasonable alternative, he would damn your soul good-humouredly to hell, and offer to toss you for half a sovereign or nothing. This appeal was well-nigh irresistible to any Irishman with sporting blood in his veins : often it was not until later, calmer moods that you realised how heavily the odds were in Michael's favour—assuming that your price was much fairer than his, as it usually was; but if you had the strength of mind to resist his blandishments, he would laugh and accept whatever you thought right. With innocent clerics from the country he adopted the attitude of a well-meaning sinner groping for the light. " I'm toult that's a good book to read, Father," he would say, showing some artless parish priest one of the books of devotional theology he kept handy for the purpose. " Would ye advise me to read that, Father ? "

And while he listened to the words of wisdom that fell from the flattered priest, he would spare a wink on the off-side to a child of darkness like myself, who was equally flattered at being taken into the arcana of commerce. After that, it was no trouble to cajole the reverend gentleman into paying fancy sums for unsaleable stock. "Yes, Father—that's a very rare book. I've been forty years in the thrade and that's only the second copy I've seen. . . . His Lordship the Bishop of Meath had the other when he was this way, eight or tin years ago; he'd bought it off wan of thim big London dealers for four guineas. . . . But I always give the clergy the lowest terms, an' I can let ye have that for twelve and six." The deal being concluded to every one's satisfaction, the priest would depart beaming over his prize, and Michael would replace the decoy volume on its shelf ready for the next occasion, and resume his study of the 'Pink 'Un,' not altogether discontented with a profit of about five hundred per cent.

When I had finished loitering in Hickey's, I felt I had done my duty towards literature for the day, and I was free to head westwards along the Quays to my ultimate goal. Philistine though I was, I had often to pause for a moment at Grattan Bridge to enjoy the finest view in Dublin—the mass of ancient houses rising from the shadows of the two cathedrals with their roofs and pinnacles and spires bathed in amber sunshine, the river in its dark curved canyon reflecting gleams of orange and purple from the glory of the evening sky, Then I walked down Capel Street and at number

140 turned into a small shop, known and loved amongst musicians throughout the world, and yet so unobtrusive that unless you knew exactly where it was, you would probably fail to find it. In it was made the bugle that sounded the charge at Balaclava; and to it I have seen brought for repair in the same week a double-bass that had been run over by a cab in Birmingham, a fiddle that had broken its neck in Vienna, and another that had been dissolved into fragments by the moist heat of Nigeria: for it demands far less craftsmanship to make a tolerable fiddle than to repair a good one adequately when it has been gravely injured.

If the shop happened to be empty when you entered, you had time to glance at the rows of violins that covered the walls, the wind instruments and accessories that stood in the large glass case, and the 'cellos and double-basses that barely left a practicable pathway to the counter, before an elderly gentleman, whose appearance reminded you strongly of Johannes Brahms, emerged from behind a screen at the far end and waited with quiet attention to hear your requirements. This was the senior partner, John M'Neill, whom you consulted when you were harassed with doubts about the value of the guaranteed old Italian fiddle you had bought for two pounds from an optimistic pawnbroker and were wondering if you ought not to have risked another five shillings to get a genuine Stradivarius; for you knew that John's opinion, however disappointing, could be accepted as infallible. From him, too, if you asked

(but not otherwise) you got advice on musical questions that was as sound as it was disinterested. If your ear for pitch was defective, you would not be encouraged to learn the violin or the trombone ; and unless you had at least taste and intelligence, neither John nor his younger brother, Tom, would make a *faute-de-mieux* suggestion of the piano. If you were by way of playing on a musical instrument—or on what, in the hands of more competent performers is generally allowed to be a musical instrument—and complained of your faulty technique, Tom would take your bassoon, or whatever it was, from you, and without hurting your feelings by a display of didactics would show you how to get round an awkward passage by some adroit modification of the orthodox fingering ; and if you had any real talent, however slight, for execution or expression, Tom's discerning praise would please you more than the most insidious or blatant flattery. If you wanted a 'cello, John would sell you one which not only was the best available for the money but also had the precise quality of tone you hankered after ; but he never tried to induce any one to buy anything, for he looked upon ' salesmanship ' as one of the worst symptoms of what he called " this age of vulgar advertisement." He was incorrigible in flouting the most sacred traditions of Big Business. Just before the War, a consignment of strings went astray in transit, and he sent a second order to replace them ; both lots eventually turned up ; and shortly afterwards the price of strings rose, as the supply was cut off, until they were selling in Dublin at three times

their former cost. I congratulated John on this welcome offset to the numerous losses he had incurred, and he said: "Yes, I'm very glad to have them for my old customers—but of course we couldn't dream of charging anything extra in the circumstances."

When the brothers had known you for some time, if they thought well of you they might extend an invitation to join them in the inner room. It was a rare compliment, though its worth might not be immediately obvious; for the room was grimy with the smoke and dust of a century. The work-benches and table were littered with tools, rosin, glue, bows about to be re-haired, flutes and clarinets in need of new pads or keys or springs, and cornets, sax-horns and euphoniums struck dumb by accidents in the military band-room until John's skilful hand rubbed out their bruises and replaced their damaged pistons; and the blackened walls were festooned with fiddles waiting their turn for repair, on many of which Tom had sketched portraits in chalk of their owners whose names he was likely to forget. But the company that assembled there had a character of its own; it is not easy to say what it was, for the various members came from widely separated ranks of society and very different callings. Amongst those who attended with some regularity, I can recollect five professional musicians, a solicitor, a K.C., two physicians, an ex-army schoolmaster, a retired stationer, and a civil engineer. Many of the leading singers, actors, and instrumentalists made a habit of dropping in whenever they reached Dublin, and

their visits were always appreciated; but they were felt to be honoured guests rather than children of the household. At first sight, the familiars seemed to have little in common beyond an interest in music and esteem for their hosts; yet in twenty-six years of constant meeting I do not remember the fellowship being ever broken or even endangered by anything but death; if misfortune overtook you elsewhere, all the expertise and influence of the combination were immediately at your service; no matter what grievance you brought to the Saturday gathering, you were sure that it would be considered from *your* point of view, and whatever could be done to help you would be done without request or obligation. The brothers must have had some exceptional gift of insight to select congenial spirits under such heterogeneous disguise, and it will always be a source of pride to me that I passed their test. When I look back at my official career, I sometimes feel that I shall have done enough for fame in this world if my name is handed down to posterity as that of the man who inserted the seventeenth column in Schedule B7/513/PA.; but when I am put upon my defence in the Hereafter (where I understand weight is laid rather upon moral qualities than actual achievement) I think the best thing I can say will be: "Well, the M'Neills were always glad to see me."

The brothers not only looked like, but were, distinguished gentlemen of the old and good school which is now, I suppose, moribund if not extinct. For people they were fond of, they had that most delightful smile which is born not on the lips but

in the heart. Their exquisite manners, without being too formal or over elaborate, recalled the Eighteenth Century; and they must have been amongst the last to use the adjective 'elegant' with discrimination. That, with an appreciation of nuance and an artistic precision in their most casual utterances, always made me think of lavender, still-rooms, ruffles, rapiers, minuet time, and Jane Austen. When you got on intimate terms with them, you would address them by their Christian names, but it would never occur to you to slap them on the back. Occasionally, strangers pushed their way uninvited into the inner sanctum; but they were received with such mild and courteous deference that they never attempted to return.

Had Fate been kinder, John would have been an architect, and Tom a painter; professionally, John played the French horn and Tom the flute, but John's favourite was the 'cello and Tom's the piano. Of the instruments not commonly found in the pre-jazz band, they had a good word for the guitar and the English concertina. But the banjo they placed beyond the pale, the mandoline and the saxophone just within it. Both deemed the piano out of place in the orchestra because it did not blend well and was never in tune with itself or its contemporaries. John indeed went further and regarded it in any circumstances with that aversion which is not the beginning of love: he liked the German gibe: "Is he musical? Ach, no; he blays de biano." Luckily they were spared the sound of 'The Indian Love Call' rendered, with 'effects,' on a cinema organ.

Had I been wise enough to act as diligent Boswell to their Johnson, I could have collected memorabilia about most of the celebrities that flitted across the Dublin scene between 1850 and 1900 ; but they have gone, instead, into the wallet where Time puts alms for oblivion. I can remember John describing Mr Bernard Shaw as a pale, red-haired, self-possessed youth coming in for clarinet reeds, and Sir Henry Irving as a seedy utility actor at the Queen's Theatre, and Trebelli-Bettini sustaining herself with a surreptitious draught of porter in Juliet's death song, and Dr Sigerson getting a door made in the back of his 'cello so that he could keep his boots in it. But what was most remarkable in the two brothers, who were aristocratic and conservative to the finger tips, was that they dwelt, by preference, on the present and the future rather than on the past : they were always eager to hear a novelty in thought or science, to which their minds remained fresh and receptive up to the very end. On the intellectual, or perhaps I should say emotional, side, their only marked deficiency was insensitiveness to poetry ; indeed I have heard John quote ' Paradise Lost ' with disfavour ; its inversions and pomposities, as he called them, annoyed and betrayed him into the heresy that Milton's case, such as it was, might have been expressed more clearly and impressively in prose.

" Then you don't think verse is suitable for dialectics ? " I said.

" I don't," said John. " And I don't get the ' organ roll ' that critics talk about either. I know

I ought to, but I can't. To me, organ music is music written for the organ by J. S. Bach. Poetry never suggests music to me."

"Does music suggest anything to you?" I asked.

"Nothing except music," said he. "When you say that the Symphony Pathetique has colour and a string quartette has not, you are using a conventional analogy which may convey some idea to persons who know these things already; but you must not carry it too far or imagine it describes, much less explains. . . . Do I make myself understood? . . . I mean that you can't interpret music in terms of art or literature or indeed in any terms but its own."

To me, this isolation of sound from all other media of expression was nearly unintelligible. When I differed from John on such a topic, I felt that only his innate good-breeding could prevent him from telling me, in the words of Charles Reade: "Sir, you have contradicted me about a subject in which I am profoundly learned and you are as ignorant as dirt"; and yet the theory seemed to reduce all possible comment on music to the technical analysis which tells everything that nobody wants to know. "The first movement in A begins on the tonic, rises to the mediant, and after eight bars modulates into the dominant, whence it lapses into the minor and finally returns to the original key." All this is true, and, I have no doubt, edifying; but after all, grammar is for grammarians. Yet when I once asked John with crushing rhetoric whether he would understand the 'Intimations of Immortality' better or feel it

more if I insisted on parsing it for him, he said penitently that he thought he would. I am glad, now, that I had grace enough to laugh and refrain from trying his genuine humility further with my boyish arrogance.

I hope and believe that this was the only matter about which we were not in absolute sympathy: I could not convey to him that when I said that the music of Carmen was yellow, I meant that I got from it much the same sensation as I did from looking at a field of buttercups—the impact of something vivid and energising and a little garish. When I listen to Mozart I visualise a sunny landscape in an Arcadia where all is youth and joy, and evil never intrudes; but I admit that in his case I may be influenced by early associations, for he was my first love amongst the immortal composers. His mere fertility on his own level was a constant amazement to me. I used to think wonderingly of the days when you could leave ten gulden and an order for a new Sonata at Mozart's house in the morning, and have a masterpiece delivered at your door that night. If you asked for a sarabande for two tin whistles and a mouth-organ, I am verily persuaded that he would sit down forthwith, chuckling, and produce a miracle of beauty that would be not only delightful in itself but admirably calculated to exploit all the resources of the instruments. I came much later to Beethoven, who always makes me think without words. He states, he explains, he develops an argument, he illustrates, he looks at the subject from different angles, he hesitates, he gropes, and

sometimes he scolds or bursts into a roar of Gargantuan laughter; but ultimately he convinces. Invariably, I feel that I ought to understand: frequently, I think I do understand; but what it is I understand, I cannot tell, except that it is some great matter—perhaps the clue that will make sense of the universe and find it friendly.

One of the medical men who belonged to our informal assembly used to come to my help in these arguments. He called Beethoven musical metaphysics, and Bach musical geometry. He insisted that a coarse oboe or a forced stopped note on the horn recalled onions to him so forcibly that the theatre seemed to reek with them. It was not, he alleged, that the tone of the oboe in an orchestra was as distinctive as the flavour of an onion in a stew; for that might be simply because each had, for him, a certain characteristic acidity. It was much more than that: he firmly believed that in another and a worse world he would find that the oboe was really a species of onion—and he detested onions.

John used to tell us that these were our reactions and ours only, and that we did not agree in our impressions with each other or with any one else. In his opinion (always given with a gentle deprecation of its worth) music was a queer by-product of the unaided human mind; for it was an illusion to think that it existed in the songs of birds or the babblings of brooks; and it had no relation to painting or sculpture because it was not imitative: to explain it, you would have to explain consciousness first. When the psycholo-

gists had settled that, and the world had found a great composer who was also a great poet, the question might be settled; he did not think that poets who had been executants, like Milton or Browning, had been very illuminating so far.

Tom was the more taciturn and astringent of the two: he rarely spoke at any length, but he was the most tolerant of listeners. As Newman says of Keble, "His silence was not as the silence of other men": there was companionship in it, not superiority or hostile criticism. It was only at the expense of 'thrusters'—the strong men who bully the weak, and cringe before power, and trample down the diffident to force their way into wealth and public office—that he ever let fall a remark of cynical approval to emphasise his contempt. He had the artist's eye for form and colour, and he would linger with placid satisfaction over the finish of an Amati fiddle-scroll, pointing out grace of line and modelling that, unaided, I should never have been able to detect. He died as he had lived, without notice or display, growing thinner and more silent week by week until finally he took to his bed one winter evening and forgot to get up in the morning. As he wished, no announcement was put in the papers, and there were only five of us left to follow his coffin through the deep snow on his last journey.

John, too, died suddenly in his sleep. I was far away then, and when I returned there were only memories and ghosts to greet me in Capel Street, but I could not resist the craving to see the home of many happy hours, once again, before I left

Dublin for ever. As I pushed open the door, my feet automatically avoided the double-bass over which I used to stumble nearly every Saturday twenty years ago; it was not there. Everything was changed; the shop had been repainted; it smelt of varnish and soap-suds; it was clean and tidy and glittering; and before I could make my escape, an energetic young salesman in a white apron bustled up to the counter where John and Tom were wont to stand, and asked me what he could do for me. "Put back the clock and give me yesterday," I was tempted to tell him in the words of the play; but that was too melodramatic and he would not have understood. I made some trivial purchase to gain time for a final glance round; and over the door of the back room into which I once could have walked unannounced and been welcomed with the greeting, "We knew your step, old friend," I saw a glaring placard: "No admission except on business."

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE HOME FRONT.

"Those which attempt to shake an Estate are commonly the first overthrowne by the fall of it: he that is the first mover of the same reapeth not always the fruit of such troubles; he beats and troubleth the water for others to fish in."—MONTAIGNE.

DURING the Eighties and Nineties in Ireland, the military were regarded collectively (especially when they marched with a band) as a fine free show: individually 'the sojers' took their place in the scheme of things with dentists or bookmakers or any other skilled tradesmen. But the Boer War sowed seeds of discord. The politicians exploited it to irritate English sentiment, and the fashion they set was followed by Catholic and Celtic Dublin, which cared as much for Dutch Protestants as a cat does for a Pekinese. Even the exhilaration Irishmen derive from seeing other people going to fight could not make them neglect such a trump card in the patriotic pack. Regiments largely Irish, *en route* for the front, were hooted down the Dublin quays because they were loyal to their oath; yet if a private had deserted, the gutter-

snipes that led the hissing would have been the first to despise him.

Few of those who boohed were so foolish as to risk spoiling a good prejudice by trying to rationalise it. The Boers were against the British and that was enough: they were manifestly heroes and comrades in affliction. About this time, one of the organisers of the Gaelic League delivered a lecture on Brian Boru at a village in Westmeath. The dispensary doctor told me that, as the audience were leaving the hall, he heard a member of the local Board of Guardians, a political power in his district, say to a companion: "That was a grand spache. But tell me—who was this Brienboroo anyway? Was he wan of thim Bore laydthers?"

"All things come to an end, pestilence as well as beautiful music," and eventually the Boer War grew stale. Queen Victoria visited Ireland and was received with courtesy and respect: I used to see her, guarded only by two outriders, taking her morning drive through the poorest quarters of Dublin, as free from danger as she could be anywhere: the sole risk—that of a homicidal lunatic—was certainly no greater than it would have been in Liverpool or London. 'The sojers' drifted back to their median position in public esteem, where they remained until the gun-running at Larne invited the National Volunteers to make a counter-stroke at Howth. The force of police that met the Volunteers was not strong enough to disarm them, and when military reinforcements arrived, most of the crowd escaped through the fields with their weapons. The soldiers

were followed on their way back to barracks by a jeering mob, stones and bottles were thrown, and some civilians were shot in the return firing. Killing policemen or soldiers is the exuberance of youth, but killing civilians, except to promote Republicanism, is a serious matter; and during the last week of July 1914, the military dropped to the nadir of their popularity.

Then the Great War broke out. John Redmond, "the leader of the Irish race at home and abroad," declared himself on the side of the Allies and took with him the majority of the constitutional Nationalists and nineteen-twentieths of Dublin. The Sinn Feiners subsided into obscurity: for over a year 'God Save the King' was played in Dublin theatres without raising more than an occasional growl of sedition. But it was obvious that the power of the extremists was growing steadily, and that they were plotting mischief, though few guessed how much mischief they could make. I shall omit the usual surmises on what might have happened if every one had done what they did not do, and refrained from doing what they did do: on that hypothesis, I offer only the tentative inference that the results would probably have been slightly different. The outstanding fact clear to the average Loyalist was, that while his heart and soul were strained towards the contest abroad, while he brooded over the fate of those dearest to him, while he was cheered by a victory in Galicia or saddened by a calamity in France, a hell-broth was brewing thicker and thicker round his own home. Early in this period I saw the 'Pals'

Battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers leaving for Gallipoli. It was one of the last occasions, if not the very last, on which the 'Dubs' exercised their privilege of marching through the streets with fixed bayonets; and as I watched the cold grey ripple of steel under the dismal autumn sky, I seemed to hear a Cassandra voice telling me that the old order was dead, and that whatever might be the outcome of the war, the Dublin I loved could never again be what it was when I played as a child along the sands of its bay.

Although it was known that devilry was afoot, nobody knew then—I doubt if any one knows now—who actually fomented it. Names were mentioned, half-secrets were breathed across dinner tables and in inner rooms, but there was always a suspicion that the figures of whom we learned a little were being worked by figures about whom we learned nothing—just as, not long after, puppets like Darrel Figgis who were recognised, if grotesque, features of our mimic stage, were manipulated by one Michael Collins, who might, for all we could tell, be a syndicate or a myth or our next-door neighbour. A trivial incident will show how Dublin regarded some of those who, in their own opinion, were dangerous and stealthy desperadoes. Darrel Figgis, 'on the run' and disguised up to the eyebrows to attend a Sinn Fein meeting, had halted at a street corner to buy an evening paper. "Misther Figgis," said the newsboy as he passed it over, "the peeler beyant there toult me to tell ye, if ye keep stannin' undther that lamp, he can't help seein' ye."

The men who signed the proclamation of the First Irish Republic were all of high character; and if their policy required innocent blood, at least they were ready to give their own. Most of them were of a type familiar enough in Ireland, the dreamer who balks at nothing to make his dream come true, the idealist more potent for evil than any of Mr Edgar Wallace's master criminals. Pearse, the nominal commander-in-chief, was a fanatic after the pattern of Don Quixote, ascetic, kind-hearted, unselfish. He took up arms with little or no hope of success, looking forward calmly to his own death in the turmoil, and content that it should be so, if he might be the Moses of this tragic exodus. With him were young poets, second editions of himself, and an old Fenian whose feelings towards England had not been sweetened by years spent in an English jail. But the strangest member of that doomed company was Connolly, the labour agitator and founder of the 'Citizen Army.' He, too, was a fanatic but a fanatic socialist. It was for his class rather than his country that he fought: to him, the Manchester labourer was much more important than, say, the Irish farmer. On the collapse of the union he had organised in Belfast, he established another in Dublin under 'Jim' Larkin. There, though overshadowed by his oratorical chief, he attracted a good deal of attention, mostly unfavourable, during the riots of 1913. No Prussian Junker held the gospel of violence more sincerely; he suppressed malcontents in his own ranks as ruthlessly as did any of the capitalists whom he attacked; yet he

bound his subjects to him with an intense loyalty. When his great strike failed, after causing incalculable damage to the trade of Dublin, he threw in his lot with the men who were bent on upsetting the social system he hated. He was much too able not to foresee the outcome, much too cool-headed to wage a losing battle, as many Irishmen would, for the sake of a spectacular flourish, much too sane to be deceived by the illusion of victory that he tried to communicate to his followers. Perhaps his power was less than we imagined, and the more headstrong of his army forced his hand at the crisis; it may have been that, like a much greater leader, "he could a people raise but could not rule." Whatever was the secret, he kept it to his grave. Like the others, he met death manfully—a wild, wilful figure, capable of better things than he accomplished.

At the actual outbreak of the Rebellion on the Easter Monday of 1916, I happened to be in Kent, an accident to which I probably owe the fact that I am now able to write these recollections; for the best chance of surviving the dawn of a new era in Ireland lies in not being there. The news did not filter through to me until Tuesday; I left at once, but did not get to Kingstown until about six o'clock on the following Thursday morning. As we approached the coast, the sun rose over a sea as placid as a lake; the sky was without a cloud and the Bay looked its quiet loveliest; the sole omen that all was not well with the world was the gigantic column of smoke curling up from the city and hanging in thick oily eddies above its centre.

When we landed, we heard that all communication with Dublin was cut off. Passengers who delayed to find cabs were soon turned back by the military, for hour by hour more troops became available for duty, cordons were drawn across all the thoroughfares, and the watch grew stricter. By starting at once to trudge in, I escaped any trouble for the first five miles except from the weight of my portmanteau, which, in accordance with the well-known mathematical law, increased directly with the square of the distance traversed; but I was nervous about the safety of my family and home, round which rumour stated that some of the fiercest fighting had taken place. At Booterstown, a guard of four soldiers held me up. The corporal in charge said he had orders to stop the road. If life has not brought me much other wisdom, it has taught me never to quarrel with any one for carrying out orders; so I rested on the low stone wall beside the path, chatted, and handed round cigarettes. The soldiers, who were strangers to the town, did not know the names of the streets they had been in, themselves, and had only the vaguest ideas of what had occurred elsewhere; they believed that the Sinn Feiners had fortified a house near mine, and had been eventually burned out after a siege lasting some forty-eight hours, in the course of which many residents in the district were killed. This, which subsequently proved to be true, did not add to my comfort; and while we smoked, I meditated my next move with much uneasiness of mind.

Presently, another pedestrian came along, whom

I remembered to have seen on the mail-boat. In appearance and brusquerie he was John Bull incarnate. When the corporal explained the position courteously to him, he fell at once into the hectoring mood. Was he not the representative of Messrs Blank—a firm at whose august name we should have trembled, but which to me, at any rate, had only the charm of novelty? Did not the interests of British Commerce demand that commercial travellers should travel? Had he not come to Ireland on business, and was all this nonsense business? How on earth could business be transacted if a business man who carried a first-class ticket (he displayed it) was to be molested on the King's highway by jacks-in-office in khaki uniform? If he had cursed like a human being, I think everybody would have sympathised; but he harangued. I must admit he did not threaten to write to the 'Times,' but he propounded all the other traditional formulas, including telling the soldiers that he would report them to their superior officers. At length he ran out of breath and rhetoric, and the corporal produced his solitary repartee. "'Ere," said he. "'Op it!" And as the command was given with a tightening of lips and a significant touch on the rifle, the exponent of Mr Bottomley's ideals 'opped it with more *joie de vivre* than might have been anticipated from his roll-top-desk profile.

As soon as he was out of sight, I rose wearily to follow. "Look 'ere, chum," remarked the corporal. "I've orders to shut the road, but they didn't say anythin' about the railway. Nuff

said ? " He jerked his thumb at the Dublin South Eastern line close by, and grinned. I thanked him ; went back a little distance to observe the decencies of the situation ; and returned along the embankment until I reached Merrion, where I emerged again upon the road. At Ballsbridge, a mile or so nearer town, the military had placed barricades beside the entrance to the grounds of the Royal Dublin Society. They informed me they were attacking buildings held by the rebels only a few hundred yards away, and they refused politely but firmly to let any one pass.

Here I committed an act of folly that confirms my title to share in the lunacy of my countrymen. It was evident that the other bridges would be equally closely guarded, and that I should suffer a similar rebuff at them all ; but I remembered that not far off there was a cricket field, from which the river could be forded with little more than wetting one's boots. I went up Anglesea Road, climbed over a fence into this field, and crossed the Dodder in full view of thirty or forty houses and three thoroughfares. It was eminently a season for Safety First : a time when respectable citizens did as they were told, asking no questions for conscience' sake ; and here was a furtive scoundrel sneaking into the prohibited area with a portmanteau obviously stuffed full of ammunition. Had I been shot down out of hand, my heirs, executors and assigns could not reasonably have complained. But in Samuel Butler's wicked phrase, " as luck would have it, Providence was on my side," and no disaster befell me until I came to

the boundary wall of the city proper at Baggot Street Bridge.

Up to this point, though I had been conscious of a steady crackle of musketry somewhere, I had thought of it as a distant phenomenon, interesting, doubtless, for future enquiry, but of no practical importance to me then and there. But as I tramped up Baggot Street it was gradually borne in upon me that something had gone wrong with the routine of the suburbs. It was now nearly nine o'clock on a fine morning, yet the roads were deserted; avenue after avenue lay bathed in glittering sunshine, but not a man, woman, or child, or even a dog stirred on any of them; and this uncanny solitude grew ominous and sinister. However, I was within a few minutes' walk of my own house, and I turned towards it. I had got rather more than half way when I heard a voice from the heavens calling "Get back there, you damned fool!" and some intuition told me I was the person referred to. Immediately afterwards, a rifle was let off beside my ear, and I saw two soldiers crouching behind a garden wall; one had just fired and the other was motioning me back.

Previously, I had been too much concerned about the danger to my family to appreciate the scene around me; but now I became aware of a multitude of things: of the 'weep' of bullets in the air, of puffs of dust where others nipped the white road, of frightened faces peering from behind upper windows and being hurriedly snatched away; and I had just sufficient intelligence left to grasp what all that meant without having to ask any

one for an explanation. I felt suddenly naked and empty from plain vulgar funk. My first impulse was to run back; but the nearest shelter was in front, and I had read somewhere that bullets travelled faster than I could. A foolish shame prevented me from wriggling sensibly to cover on my stomach; so I tried to look as like a Sinn Feiner as possible, and went forward in the sort of galvanic shuffle to which fatigue and panic had reduced me. As I rounded the corner, a vicious 'fwatt' of a bullet against the wall taught me that, unwittingly, I had, like the old postilions, kept a gallop for the finish; I showed a turn of speed that surprised myself, and in another second I was up the steps and safe inside my home, where my mother was piloting the housemaid through the normal evolutions of Spring Cleaning. April was the month set apart by the domestic code for Spring Cleaning, and that sacred rite could not be postponed for merely incidental Revolutions.

Although the main forces of Sinn Fein surrendered on the following Saturday, the shooting continued at all hours for over a week. "'Tis only a dah an' a Snider that makes a dacoit. Widout thim, he's a paceful cultivator, an' a felony for to shoot," says Mulvaney. It was the same with the Sinn Feiner. On the streets, he was a lowly but faithful subject of King George; anon, he would slip into his tenement, extract his rifle and ammunition from beneath the loose plank in the floor, and emerge through a skylight a naturalised citizen of the Irish Republic. My neighbourhood offered exceptional facilities for sniping. A line of double

roofs, with a gutter between them, extended over three sides of a long rectangle that gave plenty of opportunities for entrance and exit. A sportsman could pop up to the slates from an attic, walk three or four hundred yards behind perfect shelter, open fire on top of a disturbed but loyal household, and get to ground again in his own burrow without leaving a clue to his whereabouts. Naturally, operations were carried on most briskly at night. I would be awakened by the shattering crash of a rifle let off a couple of storeys above my head—whether by friend or foe I had no means of knowing. It would be answered from some remote fastness, and presently the thud of the reply arriving outside would jar all the pictures on the wall. Fortunately for me, the Eighteenth Century builders had atoned by solidity for whatever they lacked in taste, and I have kept a partiality for their style of architecture ever since. The intermittent crackle would swell to a continuous roar, a machine-gun would join the welter of noise, and then the immediate storm would die down, and I could hear another beginning to ferment in a different quarter. By day, the fusillades were much less frequent : whole hours might drift by without a sound, and then a missile would snap against our parapet or splinter a chimney pot. One afternoon, while I was chatting with my mother beside a window, a bullet ripped through the glass, cutting the back of her hand. We were inclined to avoid that window afterwards. From another, I saw a neighbour start to cross the road and drop in the middle of it ; he died before any

of the dozen persons who witnessed his fall could get to him. He was an inoffensive kindly man, who had nothing to do with politics, and doubtless the shot was meant for some one else; nevertheless, he remained dead.

I ought to have grown accustomed to these pleasantries, but I didn't. Every morning we had to search for unlooted shops to buy provisions, and it was quite usual to overtake a Judge of the High Court carrying a paper bag of flour under his arm, or to exchange a loaf for a few rashers with a distinguished surgeon. While thus foraging, I often had to enter zones of fire from which I was glad to escape with my skin whole, but somehow they did not shock me as I was shocked by the shooting round my own house. That area I regarded, irrationally, as being transcendently safe —safe beyond all other less favoured regions of the earth—and when I saw men killed there, I was filled with a sort of bewildered horror and wrath, like a Samoan before a violated taboo. That angry sense of outrage comes back to me now and unfits me for writing about the subject in the suave, detached, and slightly cynical style affected by our best modern historians. I trust I may be forgiven any unbecoming acrimony that has crept into my narrative on this account.

I forget now how the rumour reached us of the surrender of the main force of the rebels, but I remember asking a Sergeant of the Sherwood Foresters if it were well founded. "Ow, yes," he replied. "I believe they've all come in now—except a few of the 'Ill tribes." As a matter of

fact, the ' 'Ill tribes ' (*i.e.*, the snipers on the roofs) kept up the campaign for some time longer. But when the Volunteers in the Post Office and the College of Surgeons and Boland's Bakery gave up their arms, we were at liberty to ramble farther afield and get some idea of the destruction that had been wrought. Sackville Street, the glory of our city, presented the saddest spectacle. Half of it lay in smoking ruins ; the roadway was piled with débris from fallen buildings ; the walls that yet stood were scarred with marks of bullets and shells ; and the air was filled with the dry acrid smell of smouldering wood. We met our friends, exchanged congratulations on being alive, and told our various experiences : Ireland being still Irish, there were flashes of incongruity to enliven the drab monotony of murder, and a few of these may be worth preserving.

On the fatal Easter Monday, an acquaintance of mine motoring home from Fairyhouse Races was held up near the Phœnix Park by Sinn Feiners who commandeered his car but let him go unharmed. As he was walking away, he was ordered back. He hesitated, fearing that his captors, repentant of their mercy, were about to shoot him ; but before he could make up his mind to run, a dozen rifles were levelled at him, and he tottered to his doom. " Is it thrue," asked the leader in an anxious undertone, " that ' Capricorn ' won to-day ? "

The then Lord Chancellor of Ireland naturally wanted to see what damage had been done to the buildings and documents at the Four Courts ; so

as soon as the military took possession from the rebels, he went to investigate. The sentry stopped him at the gate. "But I am the Lord Chancellor," he urged. The sentry remained "like Teneriffe or Atlas, unmoved": he had orders not to let any one pass without a permit; but he would send for the officer in charge. When he arrived, the Lord Chancellor put his case: "I am the representative of the King, and you *must* let me in."

"I beg your pardon," replied the lieutenant. "You forget that Martial Law has been proclaimed, and *I* represent His Majesty here." And it was only when one of the Lord Chancellor's officials, who lived on the premises, recognised and went bail for him, that he was admitted.

Another member of the legal profession, although of the lower rank, was held up in the same locality and ordered to state his business. "I'm a solicitor," he said.

"What's the date of the Conveyancing Act?" demanded the sentry, who had been a law clerk himself before he became a Kitchener recruit.

"1881," said the solicitor, and went through triumphantly.

Immediately the police were driven off the central streets of Dublin, the natives of the underworld came to the surface to pick up whatever flotsam might drift their way. They broke into unguarded shops, chose well-fitting clothes and boots, and departed with anything portable that caught their fancy. An old lady tied her shawl round a useful assortment of souvenirs she had gathered from a drapery warehouse and left it on the doorstep

while she returned to make a further selection. During her brief absence another freebooter annexed shawl and contents and went on his way rejoicing. When she came out and discovered her loss, she sat down on the pavement and mourned aloud. " Would yez think," she exclaimed, " that anywan in Dublin 'd be mane enough an' dishonest enough to do the likes of that on a poor oul' crathur like me ? "

Another believer in the maxim that God helps those that help themselves was going home from a successful marauding expedition when she encountered her parish priest. He raised an interrogative eyebrow as he looked at the suspiciously bulky bundle she was carrying, and she responded with the pious remark : " God's very good to the poor these days, Father."

On the Sunday after Easter, the preacher in the Roman Catholic pro-Cathedral in Marlborough Street delivered a vigorous homily on the crime of theft. He pointed out that there was no difference between looting and plain stealing ; he warned his congregation that if they did not confess the sin, the absolution was imperfect and worthless ; and even after full confession a priest could not grant absolution unless the plunder had first been given up. Remembering, however, that some of his flock might feel diffident about approaching the police with stolen property, he added that if they brought it to the Presbytery with a label showing where it came from, he would do his best to get it returned.

This austere teaching was, no doubt, novel to

many of his hearers, but they were accustomed to humour the Church even in her most unreasonable moods, and they accepted the doctrine as a matter of faith, if not of belief. For the next week or so, after nightfall the hall porter at the Presbytery was plagued by incessant rings at the bell; but when he opened the door, there was rarely any one at it: a roll of cloth, a table, a chair, a dozen umbrellas, a clock, a case of cutlery, a pair of binoculars or what not, reposed anonymously on the doorstep, and only the sound of feet retiring modestly in the darkness proved that the donor was not supernatural. Some of the stuff thus jettisoned bore labels, but most of it did not, so that the work of finding the owners was protracted; and after ten days, the hall and staircase began to resemble the show-rooms of a marine store dealer. The Secretary of the Hibernian Bible Society (which was nothing if not Protestant) came along at this juncture, and paused to chat with two of the Fathers who were just going out. Notwithstanding their professional opposition, they maintained very friendly relations, spiced with occasional badinage; and after the Secretary's eye had ranged meditatively through the opened doorway over the serried rows of furniture, clothing, and miscellaneous articles that choked up the interior, he observed casually: "You reverend gentlemen seem—er—to be doing rather well out of this. . . . I suppose you'll hold a bazaar soon?"

One visible aftermath of the Rebellion was the new pastime of the children in the streets: they

were 'sojers and Sinn Feiners,' hunting or being hunted, leading or being led to jail with the proper solemnity; nor could I see that one rôle was more favoured than the other. But this was the last glimpse we were to get of the Irish capacity for extracting corporate amusement out of terror.

We are all inclined to interpret public opinion as endorsing our own, and it is particularly easy to do so in Ireland where the tendency is for your casual interlocutor to agree with anything you say, or are deemed likely to think, and to keep his own view untarnished for private exhibition elsewhere. I may be wrong, therefore, in saying that, at first, Dublin was almost wholly against the Sinn Feiners, whom I heard denounced by all classes. But the majority of my fellow-citizens liked to live comfortably and, if possible, amusingly: but not dangerously; and death and privation had touched them too closely not to make their indignation genuine: so I am satisfied that 'the playboys' were generally felt to have carried their playfulness too far. Then the slow series of courts-martial and executions turned the balance slightly the other way. The high character of Pearce and his associates began to tell in their favour; their influence, as they hoped, prevailed more after their deaths than during their lives; and their cause made headway again early in 1917. Any inconveniences connected with the war were laid at the door of the British Government and helped to swell the discontent. 'Sugar queues' caused much grumbling, yet when Food Control remedied that grievance, it created another: the restrictions in Ireland were

much less severe than those in Great Britain, but they were first defied, then evaded, and finally, when both these plans failed, resented with all the allusions, hallowed by immemorial custom, to brutal injustice and British tyranny. The gradual approach of conscription was watched with uneasiness deepening into dismay, and furnished many recruits to the Sinn Fein colours; for if you must fight, it would be more pleasant to fight your traditional foes at home than strangers abroad. I was told that after a reverse on the Western front, a couple of machine gunners from the Black Watch were left isolated in a shell-hole. "There's a quare wan, Mike," said one, as he got ready to spray the attacking Huns. "Here's you an' me, two Irishmen, the last survivors of a Scotch comp'ny, thryin' to kape the Germans off the sacred soil of France!" Young Ireland, which did not look below the surface, thought it much too 'quare' to be plausible.

No one wants to be conscripted; at the best, conscription is a distasteful expedient, necessary to preserve some equality of sacrifice, and salutary for other people; but we suffered, as Great Britain did, from the ministrations of persons—themselves over age, unfit for service, or with influence to retain them in Home billets—who were vociferous that every one else should be conscripted, without, I fear, much advancing the cause they had at heart. If a man puts on a military uniform in war time, the untutored Irish infer that he purposes to visit the field of battle at a reasonably early date; but these gentry were seen recruiting

before lunch, on the golf course during the afternoon, and engaged in work of national importance over the bars of the music-halls at night; after which they doubtless retired to their beds with, as Dr Johnson says, "the consciousness of a day well spent, not in any particular good works but in the general exercise and practice of benevolence." Since this programme was continued month after month, and year after year, with only seasonal variations, spiteful critics concluded, like the second wicked baronet in Ruddigore, that "there must be a fallacy somewhere." Much nonsense can be, and has been, talked in Ireland, but if you talk fighting to an Irishman you must be prepared to fight. Whatever may be said against the Republicans—and for my own part I cannot find any word less ugly than murder to describe their actions—they meant business; they did not press any one to do what they were not ready to do themselves; but it was manifest that some of the amateur warriors were determined to defend their country with the last drop of other people's blood.

Unfortunately, too, whoever directed the publicity campaign for recruits was not always, or even usually, well advised. One excellent poster, indeed, drew many to righteousness: it set out the rates of pay and—still more valuably—the separation allowances. We traced its effects in the case of the woman who came out of chapel very dissatisfied with her spiritual exercises, because, as she said: "Here am I, kapin' the childther in the best of dacincy and puttin' by maybe as much as five shillin's a week—and there's the ——

oul' Pope prayin' for peace ! " (A military funeral, by the way, had wonderful recruiting powers. One of the inhabitants of a slum I knew was brought back wounded from France, and when he died he was given a military funeral ; the widow's pride at the display was nearly as open as her grief ; and I was told that practically every able-bodied man in the area had enlisted within a fortnight.) But many of the posters betrayed a lamentable ignorance of Irish psychology. Crude assaults on the emotions, such as the pictures of ravaged Belgium, left the average Dubliner cold ; he kept that sort of thing for the theatre. " You won't get Irishmen to join up with tears running down their faces," said a sceptical loyalist to me, as we looked at a well-meant appeal of this nature. Another advertisement, directed to wives and sweethearts, informed them : " The man who deserts his country may desert *you*." I thought it illogical, myself, and it certainly missed the man who believed honestly (as probably the majority did) that his country was Ireland and that Ireland, as such, had no interest in a European quarrel. In a third headed : " WHY WILLIAM REDMOND JOINED THE COLOURS," you found a sentence beginning : " I am too old to fight." William Redmond laid down his life to prove that he was not too old to fight ; but it was incredibly stupid to present such a target for sarcasm to a race that, at any rate, does not lack perception of the ludicrous. A circular letter from Lord Wimborne began : " Sir," and went on to say, " Your wives and children will be looked after " ; and the

normal Irishman, who is not a polygamist, jumped at the opportunity for a gibe. But I must admit that native pens sometimes offer similar challenges, which are rarely declined. When the Free State clapped a number of Republicans into gaol, the friends of the martyrs called attention to their sufferings by stencil notices on blank walls. One of these read: "Jane Comerford confined in Mountjoy Prison," and underneath was added by a different hand: "The Birth of a new Nation."

When the tidings of the armistice came through, I was on duty in my office; and as I went to lunch, I saw windows being opened and flags thrust out as the news travelled from house to house. Towards evening, the streets filled with crowds moving aimlessly hither and thither: on the whole, good-humoured and even exultant, but with an obvious leaven that did not rejoice over a British triumph. At the Theatre Royal that night, the audience rose to its feet and sang 'God Save the King'—probably for the last time.

Thence onwards, the shadows began to fall faster and deeper. First, we heard of casual raids on military stores and explosives in remote country districts; then of secret meetings, becoming less and less secret; then of threats and attacks on isolated loyalists; then of outrages and murders, growing every day more reckless. Very soon they came nearer. You opened your morning paper to read that a mansion had been burned down and its occupants maimed or killed within a cycle run of your own house; as you went to business, you were told that a detective had been shot down

in the centre of the town and that not a hand had been raised to stop his murderer. Colin Bell was dragged from a crowded tram, put against a wall, and butchered in the sight of hundreds. The 'Black and Tans' retorted upon violence with violence; bombs were hurled at their waggons as they clattered through busy streets, and they replied with volleys from their rifles. After an attack at the corner of St Stephen's Green, they held up every one in Grafton Street—the actual perpetrators having, of course, decamped—and made a search for arms. A civilian remonstrated with a 'Black and Tan' for waving an ugly pistol in his face. "It might go off," said he, in mild protest. "That's all right—I can load it again," was the cheerful answer.

A notorious wind-bag who vaunted his ultra-Republican principles in safe company, swore that he would die fighting rather than yield to these truculent bullies. He made good his boast when he was awakened late one night by low voices in front of his dwelling and what he took to be rapid gun-shots. It was only a party leaving the next house, with their taxi back-firing; but he fled in his pyjamas through a side window and was not heard of for many moons. A real Sinn Feiner baffled a real raid in a less sensational way. He was a barber and was in his shop when it was surprised by 'Black and Tans.' He tore off his coat, flung a towel round his neck, dropped into a chair and slashed a copious lather over his face; and the searchers thought he was a customer waiting his turn to be shaved.

Curfew was imposed; unless you had a permit, you had to be within doors by midnight, by eleven o'clock, and finally, if I remember aright, by eight o'clock, as the hours were curtailed in the effort to quell the forces of disorder. It was not quite certain that even a duly authorised permit was an absolute safeguard: the Sinn Fein talents were fully equal to producing admirable forgeries, which tended to discredit the genuine article; and it was widely believed that if you were out at forbidden periods, the Black and Tan routine was to shoot first and enquire afterwards. Personally, I did not believe this; but such was the general impression. A husband and wife and child, spending a pleasant evening with a friend, had suddenly realised that it was close upon Curfew, that the night was dark and they were far from home. All were alarmed, but the woman became almost hysterical with panic, and as they hurried along the vacant ways she kept up a babble of prophylactic prayers to the Saints. Just as they wheeled into their own avenue, a church bell began to toll, and with it came a sentry's challenge: "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Oh, Jazes, Mary and Joseph!" pattered the terrified woman.

"Pass, 'Oly Family!" said the sentry.

A motor patrol of regulars was combing out a suburb, when the Sergeant in charge saw a girl trying to hide behind a pillar box. The car was pulled up, and she was bidden to give an account of herself. She explained that she had been allowed out to a dance under strict injunctions to return

before ten o'clock, but, like Cinderella, she had forgotten the flight of time in the excitement of fox-trots; and when she saw her father waiting at the front gate to uphold paternal discipline, she was too frightened to face his just wrath.

"Can't you get in at the back?" asked the Sergeant, his interest aroused by a problem of tactics.

"I could that," admitted the girl. "But father would hear me and I'd catch it worse, so."

"Hm . . . well, what's the number of your house?"

"Twenty-seven."

"All right. Go round to the back and we'll look after the old man."

The car swung round the corner, and the glare of its headlights revealed a stout citizen stamping irritably to and fro at the end of his garden. He was promptly impounded for breaking the Curfew order and dragged off to Portobello barracks, from which he was released with a solemn caution only when his erring daughter had been given ample time to snuggle herself in bed.

Despite these momentary gleams of joy, the fog of terror and suspicion steadily thickened. Talk in public places was stealthy and hushed. The news of each fresh murder was whispered only to intimate friends; for nobody knew whether the man beside him in the tram or behind him on the footpath might not be one of the assassins on his way to another job. Anywhere else, the Black Sunday, on which officers were dragged from their beds and slaughtered under the eyes of their

wives, would have been a day of general rage and calls for vengeance: in Dublin, the crime was hardly mentioned except in privacy. The Custom House went up in flames. Government officials sat at their desks with loaded revolvers, wondering if it would be their turn next. Sinn Fein issued its edicts brazenly to the public, who had to placate two masters. The stoppage of work decreed when the corpse of the hunger-striking Lord Mayor of Cork was brought back to Ireland for burial put Civil Servants in a dilemma: if they obeyed, they were likely to be dismissed, if they did not, they would probably be shot; so some compromised by getting a medical certificate for a day's sick leave. A colleague of mine, a Nationalist who had no love for the latest evangel of liberty, met, on his way to the office, the owner of a one-man business and enquired if *he* were going to work. The noble fellow repudiated the suggestion with scorn: when even the trams were stopped out of respect for the martyr, was *he* going to work? Indubitably, no! My colleague, returning home at night overtook the same patriot and asked him if he had seen the procession. He had not: he had trudged every damned step of the way to Miltown Golf Course, so he had, only to find that the blasted links were shut and all the bloody caddies off skylarkin' in town.

Our inconsistency was soon rivalled. We heard that the British Government, to which we looked for help and protection, was communicating with the rebels. 'The Treaty' was signed; and Sinn Fein split into two camps. Again the nights were

made hideous with sustained rifle fire, this time between two bodies of Irish Irelanders. After a brief unexpected calm, I asked a friend who was supposed to have inside knowledge of the doings of the Constitutional party, whether the peace was likely to endure. "I think it will," said he, "unless we sign another Treaty." It didn't. The Four Courts and the old Public Record Office shared the fate of the Custom House; and when I left Dublin, I saw the smoking remains of half of Sackville Street from the spot where, six years before, I had seen the ruins of the other half. We had got Home Rule at last.

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